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THE STORY OF MY LIFE

MARIE,
QUEEN OF ROUMANIA





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THE STORY OF MY LIFE
MARIE
QUEEN OF ROUMANIA



MYSELF AT FORTY-THREE

THE STORY OF MY LIFE

MARIE

QUEEN OF ROMANIA



NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
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“Character is Destiny”

*“Let your love for life
be your highest hope, and
let your highest hope be
our highest thoughts of life.”*

NIETZSCHE

FOREWORD

THE story of my life! I have often been asked to write it, and I have always hesitated to do so for many reasons.

With the death of my dear husband, King Ferdinand, a certain chapter of my life closes, and I feel therefore that I can more easily look back upon the way, the long way, already pursued; I can look at it from farther away, less personally, and that is perhaps what I have always been waiting for.

I have always wondered from what angle I should relate my own story, knowing that to a certain degree I must weigh my words, and yet I want to be as accurate, as truthful as possible; I do not want to be too dry, but I also do not want to be too passionate; feelings must not run away with me.

In a way I want to look back upon it as though I were relating someone else's story; I would almost prefer to write it in the third person, but that would be like pretending, and I have never pretended. All my life I have been almost dangerously sincere and I cannot depart from that absolute sincerity.

I think to-day I have found the angle from which I want to write my story, the angle which represents me in relation to Roumania. Let it be Roumania and I, or I and Roumania—it comes to the same thing, and have patience with me if many thoughts, many inferences and conclusions are woven in among the facts I have to relate, for life has already been long enough and events plentiful enough to have taught me many a lesson, and to have made of me something of a philosopher in my own small way.

Roumania and I—but of course I shall have to return to the far, far past, because no life can be completely told without telling also of childhood and youth, which are such factors for the forming of character, and my childhood was a happy childhood, upon which I love to look back.

CONTENTS

PART ONE

CHILDHOOD

CHAPTER	PAGE
1. EASTWELL PARK	3
2. OSBORNE COTTAGE	26
3. CLARENCE HOUSE, SCOTLAND AND RUSSIA	49
4. RUSSIAN MEMORIES	82
5. MALTA	96
6. MORE MALTA MEMORIES	127

PART TWO

YOUTH

7. THE COBURG YEARS	143
8. EDUCATION AT COBURG	158
9. DEVONPORT—BERLIN—BETROTHAL	192
10. PREPARATIONS FOR MARRIAGE AND NEW RELATIONS	212
11. CARMEN SYLVA	239
12. THE WEDDING	258

PART THREE

EARLY WEDDED DAYS

13. WELCOME TO BUCAREST	273
14. SOCIETY IN THE CAPITAL	289

CHAPTER	PAGE
15. CAROL IS BORN	313
16. CORONATION OF NICOLAS II OF RUSSIA	327
17. BACK TO ROUMANIA	344
18. ILLNESS: FERDINAND AND CAROL	384
19. KING CAROL'S ADVISERS	407
20. MY FRIENDS	429
21. YEARS OF DISCOVERY	449
22. MORE CORONATIONS: EDWARD VII; GEORGE V	458

PART FOUR

1906-1914

23. TO GERMANY AND RUSSIA	471
24. ROYALTIES VISIT ROUMANIA	483
25. MY CHILDREN	516
26. SOME FAMILY MATTERS	530
27. ROUMANIA AT WAR	549
28. PRINCE CAROL	563
29. 1914: NATIONAL AND DOMESTIC	566
30. SERAJEVO AND AFTER	584
INDEX	597

ILLUSTRATIONS

Myself at forty-three	<i>Frontispiece</i>
Eastwell, Kent, the house where I was born	PAGE 4
Myself at the age of ten	4
My mother, as I remember her at Eastwell	5
My father—Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh, later, Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha	5
Uncle Paul—my mother's youngest brother	30
My sisters and I	31
Lilies in my garden on the Black Sea	36
Aunt Alix—The Princess of Wales	37
Grandmamma Queen—Queen Victoria	70
Grandpapa Emperor; The Emperor Alexander II	71
Grandmamma Empress—Empress Marie Federovna—with my brother Alfred as a baby	71
Aunt Miechen—Marie Pavlovna, Grand Duchess Vladimir of Russia	84
Aunt Ella—the beautiful Grand Duchess Serge of Russia	84
Uncle Serge—Grand Duke Serge, Governor of Moscow	85
Zina—Duchess of Leuchtenberg—Princesse de Beauharnais	85
We three sisters on horseback	104
Papa in his old Russian costume	105
A picnic at one of the Malta Forts	110
"Captain dear"—our great friend Maurice A. Bourke, R.N.	111
Cousin George—The Duke of York—on "Real Jam"	128
Characteristic view of Malta	129

	PAGE
Picture of Verdala—Looking down towards the Boschetto	129
San Antonio	134
The beloved little shelter at Verdala, which I found again after forty years	134
Beginning to grow up: at the age of fifteen	135
My brother Alfred at the age of eighteen	135
My bridegroom—The Crown Prince Ferdinand of Roumania	212
The Castle of Sigmaringen	213
Fürst Carl Anton of Hohenzollern Sigmaringen—my husband's grandfather	213
My father-in-law, Fürst Leopold of Hohenzollern, in the robes of the Black Eagle	222
My mother-in-law, Fürstin Antonia of Hohenzollern, born Infanta of Portugal	222
King Carol of Roumania	223
The Burg Hohenzollern	226
As a bride, in the Roumanian dress sent me by the King of Roumania	227
Queen Carmen Sylva painting, and some of her ladies	246
"Ducky," my sister Victoria, just after her marriage	247
Carmen Sylva as she was when I first saw her	248
Our first married picture	249
The first photograph taken of me in Roumania, 1893	264
My husband with our first child, Carol	265
Queen Victoria at Coburg with her daughter the Kaiserin Auguste-Victoria; and her three sons: Albert Edward, Alfred (my father) and Arthur, Duke of Connaught	324
The Emperor Nicolas II in 1896	325
Alix—The Empress Alexandra	325

ILLUSTRATIONS

xiii

	PAGE
Uncle Serge and Aunt Ella in old Russian dress	334
"Ducky" and I with our pages	335
Carol and Elisabetha as quite small children	358
There were children in my house . . .	358
Jumping a hurdle at Sinaia on my hunter "Wheatland"	359
As Colonel of the 4th Roşiori	359
Riding some favorite horses on the field of Cotroceni	404
Riding with "Ducky" in 1897	404
Cousin Charly: The Princess of Saxe-Meiningen	405
"Mignon" amongst the peonies to which I always compared her (snapshot taken by myself)	405
Ion Kalinderu	420
Off for my morning ride on "Airship"	421
Waldorf Astor on "Airship"	421
Pauline Astor dressed as a Roumanian gipsy (snapshot taken by myself)	440
My friend Maruka Cantacuzène	440
In 1907 at Cotroceni	441
My sister "Ducky" at Wolfsgarten with one of her favorite horses	450
"Ducky" and I in our younger days	451
Elisabetha in her twelfth year	456
My sister Beatrice, called "Baby"	457
The dress I wore for the minuet (with Carol)	484
Cousin Boris	485
In one of my Sinaia rooms	485
King Ferdinand of Bulgaria, a portrait he himself calls <i>Ultima Phasis</i>	500
The time of big hats	501
"Nicky" when two years old (photograph by Beresford)	518

	PAGE
"Mignon" (picture taken by Princess Nadèje Stirbey)	518
Carol at ten years of age	519
Ileana, three years old	519
Carol directing the military band	520
Uncle with Carol (snapshot taken by myself)	520
"Nicky" on horseback (snapshot taken by myself)	521
"Mignon" on horseback (snapshot taken by myself)	521
My Mamma	526
Sister Sandra	526
Uncle with Nicky	527
Carmen Sylva on Ovid's Island (snapshot taken by myself)	540
Grand Duke Kirill in 1899	540
My little Mircea	541
King Carol on the Danube in 1913, with General Averescu and Crown Prince Ferdinand	550
In national dress: my two sons and I, in the Sinaia forest	551
Grand Duchess Kirill ("Ducky") with her daughters, Marie and Kira	580
Uncle and Aunty in their old age	581

PART ONE
CHILDHOOD

CHAPTER I

EASTWELL PARK

I WAS born in Eastwell, Kent, in 1875.

A big grey house in a huge beautiful English park: woods, great stretches of grass, wide undulating horizons, not grand or austere, but lovely, quiet, noble—an English home.

I was my parents' second child. The first was a boy and he had been given the name of Alfred, after my father, who was Queen Victoria's second son and an officer in the British Navy.

My mother was delighted to have a little girl; she said she liked girls better than boys, and she called me Marie, which was her name and also her mother's. She loved and venerated her mother with all the strength of her soul.

In 1873, Marie Alexandrovna, only daughter of the Emperor Alexander II of Russia, had married Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh, and had come from far Russia to live in England.

Most people would imagine that it was a great piece of luck and happiness to come from Russia to England. But my mother dearly loved her native country, and she never really felt completely happy in England, though she had many dear friends there. We, her children, on the contrary, born in England, loved England deeply and clung with all our hearts to that love all through our lives, and it was a sadness to discover, later on, that never in her heart of hearts had our mother looked upon England as home, not as the home of homes that one passionately loves.

This is one of the sadnesses of mothers who are "exported," or should I rather say "imported"; when their own children become in their turn ardent patriots, they can never quite realize how their mothers also cling to the countries of their birth. To their minds their mother belongs to them and to the country her children were born in, and they cannot imagine any other love in their parent's heart. Certain things always remain difficult to understand and generations should be merciful towards each other, parents to their children, but also children to

their parents, for who can fathom the depths, the longings, the struggles and disappointments of the human heart? And mothers must not imagine that they can implant their ideals, their loves and their passions, in the souls of those to whom they have given birth.

Times, circumstances, environment, influences, all go to make children different from their parents; besides, a mother often forgets, when her child astonishes or disappoints her, that she did not make it all by herself. There are always two streams of blood that run in one child, two long series of ancestors (illustrious or not, that has nothing to do with it), who go fundamentally to the making of the child each mother instinctively believes is hers, for did she not carry it for nine months and then through her own agony give it life?

My parents had three more daughters, Victoria Melita, born in Malta in 1876, Alexandra Victoria, born at Coburg two years later, and last of all Beatrice, born, like me, at Eastwell in 1883, who was the "Benjamin" of the family and well knew how to affirm that enviable position.

Our childhood was a happy, carefree one, the childhood of rich, healthy children protected from the buffets and hard realities of life.

Our mother played a greater part in our lives than our father did; he, being a sailor, was often away from home; he was even a little bit of a stranger to us, a rather wonderful stranger, exceedingly good-looking, sunburnt, blue-eyed, and I seem to remember that he had almost black hair, though later on in his portraits I remarked that his hair was less dark than it seemed to my childish eyes.

Were we in awe of him? A little perhaps; he was very wonderful, anyhow, and the days when he paid attention to us were red-letter days, but it was Mamma who was the great reality of our lives.

It was Mamma who settled things, Mamma to whom we turned, Mamma who came to kiss us good night, who took us out for walks or drives. It was Mamma who scolded or praised, who told us what we were or were not to do.

Mamma loved us passionately. Her whole life was given up to her children, we were the supreme and central interest of her existence, but she had her own ideas about education, and she never admitted any mixing of generations; she was never comrade nor companion, but always very definitely the parent; the one who represented authority as



EASTWELL, KENT, THE HOUSE WHERE I WAS BORN



MYSELF AT THE AGE OF TEN



MY FATHER—ALFRED, DUKE OF EDINBURGH, LATER
DUKE OF SAXE-COBURG-GOTHA



MY MOTHER
AS I REMEMBER HER AT EASTWELL

well as love, the ruling sovereign of her household, the one who held the sceptre and let you feel that the power over good and evil was hers.

Papa was a sailor; he was also a sportsman, a very good shot and, like all English gentlemen, he loved the shooting season, and in autumn many people were invited to come to Eastwell Park, gentlemen and ladies with high-sounding names and of many nationalities.

On these occasions before going to bed we children were dressed in our finest clothes and sent down to the big library to say good evening to our parents' friends. I still remember the feeling of having my hair well brushed; I had a great mass of what my sisters called "yellow" but what I loved to think of as "golden" hair, of which old nurse Pitcathly, a splendid old Scotch woman, was tremendously proud. It would stand out in all its combed beauty, for indeed Nana groomed and cleaned and polished us up like pampered horses, and I can still feel in my shoulders the little twist I would give to be able to catch a glimpse of my own shining mane. But old Nana loved sister Ducky—as Victoria Melita was called in the family—best, and Ducky had brown corkscrew curls which Nana rolled over her finger with the aid of a comb. Ducky was my dearest chum, we were inseparable, though very different both in looks and character.

Ducky was dark and though a year younger was always taller than I, and was mostly taken for the elder, which annoyed us both. She was more serious than I and inclined to be resentful when reproved; she also loved jealously and was what our elders called a "difficult child."

I was more smiling, my hair was golden, I took things more easily than Ducky, and made friends more quickly, but Nana liked Ducky best because she imagined that the rather passionate child was often misunderstood, and perhaps she was.

Ducky and I were scrupulously fair towards each other: we always played the game and never wanted to have separate successes; we could not conceive of a life where we should not be side by side.

Later on our mother told us that she had never cared for these big shooting-parties: she said the gentlemen came home sleepy and had no conversation after a long day with their guns! Besides, she never cared for the damp English climate in winter.

Mamma was not fond of sport; she was highly cultured and liked to

talk to clever, interesting people, and I remember my rather pained astonishment when one day she told us that she much preferred diplomats and politicians to soldiers, sailors or sportsmen; this as a child and even later as a girl and quite young woman seemed incomprehensible to me, for I and my sisters had a truly feminine love of uniform and of the strong, tanned, out-door man, even if he yawned in the evening after a long day's sport!

But these parties which bored our mother were full of interest and excitement to us. We immediately classed the guests as children always do, according to their likes or dislikes. Of course their looks played a great part, but also the way they treated us, for some grown-ups know better than others how to make themselves loved by children.

I was, even at the age of five, a real daughter of Eve in my love for beautiful dress; in fact, beauty in every form found in me an ardent, yea almost a pagan adorer.

It was at one of these Eastwell shooting-parties that I first remember seeing the lovely Princess of Wales. She came down one day at tea-time in a marvellous red velvet robe with long flowing train. She dazzled me utterly, I was speechless with adoration and my enchantment can be imagined when this velvet-clad apparition, who called herself Aunt Alix, volunteered to come up to the nursery to see us in our bath!

There she sat in her glorious crimson gown, and fascinated, I gazed at her over my sponge, spellbound, fearing that the enchanting vision might suddenly fade away.

I was always strangely moved by beauty. Any form of beauty, be it a lovely woman, flower, house or horse, be it a glorious landscape or picture; each time beauty came to me I felt as though it was a God-given pleasure, a gift He had especially allowed me to possess, with my eyes at least if not with my hands. And my joy was made keener by the faculty I had of enjoying beauty as a whole as well as in detail. The splendour of a wide-spreading view of sea or mountain did not hinder me from perceiving and loving the most humble flower in the ditch.

This faculty of enjoying beauty as a whole and in detail has followed me all through life. Line, colour, form and the sounds and scents be-

longing to each picture, have made life extraordinarily rich, and with every one of those unforgettable impressions comes always that feeling of gratitude for each new beauty revealed to my soul.

To-day I still feel grateful to beloved Queen Alexandra for the vision of beauty she was to me that evening in her ruby-red velvet gown, as I also remember, later in life, how another beautiful woman of our family moved me to such a degree of enchantment that I felt like falling down before her and worshipping her as the pagans of old worshipped their goddesses.

This other beautiful woman had a tragic and terrible fate. She was the Grand Duchess Elisabeth of Russia, my cousin, sister of the late Tsarina. She had married one of my mother's younger brothers, the Grand Duke Serge. He was blown up by Nihilists, long, long before the revolution, whilst Governor of Moscow. She then entered holy orders, building a convent in which she lived, but her holy life brought her no mercy from the Bolsheviks; she was abominably slaughtered in Siberia, but curiously enough her body was found and later on transported to Jerusalem, where it now lies in the Holy Land.

She was quite newly married when her beauty burst upon me as a marvellous revelation. Her loveliness was of what used to be called the "angelic" kind. Her eyes, her lips, her smile, her hands, the way she looked at you, the way she talked, the way she moved, all was exquisite beyond words, it almost brought tears to your eyes. Looking at her one felt like exclaiming with Heine:

*Du bist wie eine Blume
So hold und schön und rein:
Ich schau dich an, und Wehmut
Schleicht mir ins Herz hinein.*

*Mir ist, als ob ich die Hände
Aufs Haupt dir legen sollt',
Betend, dass Gott dich erhalte
So rein und schön und hold . . .*

But I seem to have wandered far from my subject; forgive me this digression, but let me warn you that there will be many another as we go along.

Our life at Eastwell is as a once vivid dream become just a little dim.

It was mostly the winter months we spent there. I believe it was often cold and damp, but to me the remembrance is entirely lovely.

Certain pictures and feelings have remained specially imprinted upon my mind. I shall carry them with me to the end of my life, hoarded away with all the memories I love.

Certain scents belong specially to Eastwell. However old I may grow, the smell of dry or damp autumn leaves will ever bring the old English home before my eyes, the park with each tree standing well apart from its neighbour so that it could develop in unhindered beauty, every single one of giant growth, and we children shuffling through the dead leaves, sniffing in the pungent smell we delighted in, while wisps of mist, like smoke, played about the branches overhead. That scent of autumn leaves, no matter where I may be, still evokes the vision of Eastwell Park and its woodland paths that our childish feet once trod. And in the kitchen garden there was that perfume of violet leaves mingling with the mouldy smell of potatoes and old sacks hoarded up in the tool-house near by, and a little farther on the rather bitter scent of the high laurel hedges we would slip through, which seemed to us a darkly mysterious passage to dream places to which we must finally come.

And the huge cedar tree on the lawn in front of the house, with its lowest boughs sweeping the ground under which we would crawl. This tree was a wonderful cathedral-like mansion in which we children each possessed a room. Some brambles, having found their way beneath the old tree's shade, had climbed up its drooping branches, and swung down from them in long festoons. These hanging creepers gave a jungle-like appearance to our secret abode, and I imagined they were bell-ropes used by the fairies in the moonlight, during those enchanted hours when Nana would never let us creep out of our beds to explore the white world.

This curious sensation of mystery in all things is very characteristic of childhood. Children see things in other proportions, differently from their elders; in all things there are strange shapes, there are colours, secrets, scope for discovery, that big people are quite unaware of. There are pictures within pictures, depths within depths, in all things there are possibilities just out of reach.

I had an imaginative turn of mind. I was the one who could tell

wonderful stories to my brother and sisters, romance lived in my soul and in all things I saw more than the naked eye could perceive.

This peculiarity has followed me through life, and now, at the age of fifty-two I still see visions and beauty in the most unexpected things and places.

At Eastwell there was a terrible unexplained mystery near the big lake. Our governess or nurse did not often take us that way as it was a long distance for short legs, but occasionally we would coax them to take that road which had, all unknown to those in authority, a gruesome attraction.

Hidden away in the bushes at the farther end of the lake was a well—at least, we imagined it to be a well—and from that well came an extraordinary sound. A deep, hollow, ghostly sound, as though desperate hands were thumping, thumping, eternally thumping against dungeon doors.

“Someone is down there!” we would whisper to each other, “a ghost, a prisoner, or a terrible ogre, or some fearful creature that has been walled up?” but we never dared ask who was shut up there in that well. I do not think we even wanted to know, the glorious terror of the thing was better left unexplained. Boom, boom, boom! and our hearts would beat excruciatingly; we would hold each other’s hands and try not to hurry past or look afraid. Boom, boom!—what could it be?

To-day I know as little as I knew then what made that well, tank or reservoir, beat in the uncanny way, but in imagination I like to feel again those delicious shivers of fear we felt when we stole with hushed tread past the haunted place.

There was another corner which filled us with a feeling of dark mystery, but this was in the house itself.

I do not know if Eastwell House was as huge as it seemed to us children, but it had many unexplored parts and rooms into which we had never penetrated. Leading out of the marble-flagged hall was a broad, shallow front staircase of very dark wood, but there was also a back staircase. “No place for little girls,” declared our governess, forthwith making of the back-stairs a place of burning interest, a land of discovery and dark possibilities we longed to explore.

It was a very terrifying place, that back staircase; it gave you the

shivers as did the well near the lake, because it went deep, deep down, it seemed to descend into the very bowels of the earth. Looking over the railings, or rather, at that age, peeping through them, giddiness overcame you and you had to turn away. But as soon as you had looked away, something stronger than fear impelled you to look back again, to take another peep, because, half-way down was a mysterious corner which the servants called the "Glory Hole," and this of all places was a place "not for little girls." As far as I remember, the "Glory Hole" had a curtain before it instead of a door, which flapped backwards and forwards and there was always a light burning on the other side, so the "Glory Hole" must have been a very dark place. Like the well, even to-day I really have no clear idea what rites were perpetrated down in the "Glory Hole." Was it a pantry of sorts? I cannot say, but to our childish imagination it was a private little "Hell" peculiar to the backstairs, and we even imagined that it had a particular smell. Probably it had, but it was too far down, I think, to reach up to our inquisitive noses!

If we were discovered by the authorities peeping down over the back-stair banisters towards the "Glory Hole" we were quickly driven back to regions more in keeping with "nice little girls" as we were reprov-
ingly told.

Oh, there is so much that I remember, though it was all so long ago. The Highland cattle for instance, those wide-horned, large-eyed creatures sauntering placidly over the path that led through the park to church. Lovely creatures they were, all curly, sometimes sand-coloured, sometimes chestnut, sometimes black, and their coats were so long that the hair hung in fringes over their foreheads. This gave a rugged and at the same time an almost childish look to their faces and somehow it was those fuzzy fringes that reassured you; it made their expressions so kindly that you almost forgot the startling dimensions of their horns. They would stand as still as statues contemplating with raised heads and gentle eyes our goody-goody little procession, prayer-books in hand, winding its way to the House of God.

And the deer, whole herds of them grazing on the grass, or suddenly scared, scampering away into the woods. There was nothing more wonderful than to pick up during our rambles bits of their fallen horns,

bleached by exposure to sun and wind; these were carried home and considered great treasures.

And one day we discovered a hollow tree with a big, big hole in it. It really must have been a very big tree because we three elder sisters as well as our brother could all four of us sit inside this hole. Of course we had to crawl into it on hands and knees, but inside there was room enough for the lot of us, and this hollow tree, for a long time, was the very centre of our games. Endless marvellous possibilities had arisen in our lives because of this wonderful refuge. We were Robinson Crusoe, we were Robin Hood and his followers, we were Red Indians or pirates and goodness knows what else.

In the middle of our round and rather dark retreat there was a lump of wood which hung down, disturbing our perfect comfort and we decided that to get rid of it we must either use an axe or a saw. Such implements were not to be had for the asking, so we had to plead with our father to procure us the tool needed, and I well remember his answering that we could take a saw if we liked, but that he absolutely forbade an axe. "An axe would take off a finger at one blow," he declared, "whilst you would soon enough stop sawing if you began sawing your finger!" How well I remember his saying this; some sentences remain with you all through life.

Papa was a "rare" person, by which I mean that he did not occupy himself actively with his children; he left that to Mamma, but occasionally he would, so to say, discover us and then he would invent some game or amusement that he seemed to enjoy as much as we did. He invented a thrilling game for the winter evenings; the lamps were all put out and Papa would hide in a dark corner pretending to be an ogre. We never knew in which room he was. With fearful trembling we would crawl through the ink-black chambers and suddenly, when all danger seemed over, he would spring out from somewhere and catch us whilst we screamed as though he were really going to eat us up. It was a gruesome game and gave us the real thrill that danger gives to adventurers.

One day, rare occurrence, there was a tremendous fall of snow and Papa took us out for some tobogganing down a hill near the dairy. That was wonderful. I think it was the first snow I ever saw, and what

child can resist the fascination of snow? But in England snow never lasts—it came and went like a scarcely realized dream.

But I also remember some skating on the big lake, and although we were but wee wobbly beginners, I can still feel the rapturous ecstasy of launching forth upon the shiny surface. The keen winter air made your eyes water and painted your cheeks and nose fiery red, but it was beyond words glorious. How I remember, too, the crumply round black velvet caps, trimmed with dark Russian sable which we wore for this memorable occasion; these becoming little caps still further enhanced the pleasure of skating as did also the sip of the hot cinnamon-flavoured red wine which was given us as the sun sank in the West.

Likewise of delightful memory was the apple- and the pear-house, and I can still almost taste the aromatic flavour of the huge golden pear the gardener selected for me off one of the shelves where the fruit stood in tempting lines of green, red and yellow. Last but not least there was the excitement of Christmas!

The Christmas tree was set up in the big library, whilst the presents were laid out on white-covered tables all round the walls of the room. But what mysteries went on beforehand! Papa, especially, became tremendously important at this season; he liked occasionally to take things in hand, and became himself as eager as a child. But like all men he was excessively meticulous and could get very angry if the smallest detail he had planned was not religiously adhered to.

One of the fore-thrills of Christmas was the stirring of the servants' plum pudding. This ceremony took place in the steward's room, and also in the official part of the stables, because house and stables were two separate realms and one never dared overlap the other. The etiquette amongst the servants of a well-organized English household is all-important. An enormous bowl was set upon the table and each child had to have a "go" at the stirring, which was a stiff job, but of immense consequence.

At last Christmas Eve was there, and the library doors, which had been kept closed for several days, were thrown open, and there stood the tree, a blaze of light, and all around upon the white-decked tables, one mass of gifts for everybody, no one ever being forgotten.

Oh, glorious moment of realization! And rather shyly, holding each

other's hands, we children advanced towards all that light, till we stood in the very centre of it, were part of it ourselves.

For many, many a year the thrill of Christmas held good, the days of secret preparation beforehand, the mystery, the whispering, the hushed silence before the closed door and then the sudden fulfilment in a blaze of candlelight, accompanied by that delicious fragrance of singed fir-branches so inseparable from Christmas. Later the trouble and care of sorting, preparing, organizing became our share; the thrill, the ecstasy of fulfilment had passed over to the younger generation, but all through my life in the far land of my adoption I tried to make the Christmases I arranged as much as possible like the Eastwell, and later the Malta Christmases. For those will ever be the Christmases that remain most unforgettable to me.

I feel I dare not pause too long there where my recollections are enveloped in a haze of enchantment, due in a great part to distance and also to that wonder world in which children alone can dwell.

But something of that child-faculty of seeing pictures within pictures, depths within depths, mystery and romance in the every day, has been mine all along my road. It is the blessed faculty of beautifying things, of rendering more interesting events and people, of drawing out light rather than shade. It is the optimist's attitude, a bit trying to the pessimist, or so I have been told, but although I belong to those who see reality with "peeled" eyes, I nevertheless perceive in all things the possibility of beauty instead of the sordidness people to-day seem to delight in. I see the good in people rather than the bad, the pity and pathos in wickedness and sin, rather than the crime; far rather would I help with kind words than punish with a rod.

Weakness some may declare, but I would rather call it strength. Severity? Yes, when absolutely necessary, but seven times at least, if not seventy times seven, would I give my criminal the benefit of the doubt.

If this speciality of mine is going to be an irritation to you, then throw down my book straight off, because you will meet this spirit of optimistic tolerance all through its pages, till the very end, I hope!

Quite lately I met a delightful American who was already seventy years old; he came to Roumania to see me because he felt from afar in

sympathy with me and my attitude towards life. I asked him what he was doing and he answered: "Travelling about from one country to another to know people, because all people are lovable if you really know them, be they English, American, Chinese, Hungarian, Hottentot or Zulu. I am going to spend what days are left to me in trying to make people at least *like* each other, if *love* is too big a word!"

And that old gentleman and I clasped hands. "I thank God," said I, "for sending me someone who put my own thoughts into words!"

And now back again to my childhood, for you must still patiently follow me along more than one road, and I suppose I had better introduce you to some members of my family if this is really to be the story of my life.

The most important person, of course, dwarfing all others, was Grandmamma, Queen Victoria, "Grandmamma Queen" as we called her, in contrast to "Grandmamma Empress," my mother's mother, after whom I was called, whilst Ducky had been called Victoria after Grandmamma Queen, the name of Melita being added as Ducky was born on the enchanted island of Malta; but more of Malta anon.

I believe that Grandmamma Queen had expected that I, as eldest daughter of the family, would be given her name, but Mamma felt that I must be called Marie, a name which, because it was her mother's, was dearer to her than all others, and I must say I love my name; Mary or Marie, there is something eternal about it, because is it not the name of the Mother of God?

I do not think that my mother always found it easy being Queen Victoria's daughter-in-law, though they had a great respect for each other. Mamma had been brought up at the most autocratic of courts, the splendour of which had to be seen to be realized. She had been the Emperor's only daughter and her position had therefore been exceptional. Now she was the wife of Queen Victoria's second son and all her sisters-in-law, even the unmarried ones, had precedence over her, having rights to the English throne. I believe my mother felt this rather sorely, but I was too much of a child then to know about any of those things which perplexed or upset grown-up people. My mother kept all worry and conflict from us, we lived in a real fool's paradise. It was perhaps not a very good training for the future battles of life,

but I thank her for it, all the same, with every fibre of my heart do I thank her, because with that life which she helped us to lead, she sowed a seed of idealism in my soul which nothing, nay, neither conflict, disappointment, disillusion or stern reality, was ever quite able to uproot.

My mother had been very severely brought up, and she herself had strict ideas upon education and behaviour, but there was at the same time a wideness of mind about her which made of her an exceptional woman, and above all her generosity was extraordinary. Of course she was wealthy, but she gave even beyond what it was reasonable to give, gave and gave, to big and small, to rich and poor; her very reason of existence was to be able to give.

She made us wonderfully happy, so of course we children imagined that she was perfectly happy herself. But later on I found out that she had never been really happy, or at peace with herself; many things tormented her, she did not take life easily. The tremendously severe upbringing she had received, the care expended upon her that her education and instruction should be in every way complete, the great and somewhat oppressive influence her own religion, which was the Orthodox, had upon her, all went to make her dissatisfied and critical with herself. Outwardly she may have appeared haughty, a stickler for form and proud of her rank, but inwardly she was humble, always tormenting herself, tortured with the idea that she had never lived up to the ideal set for her by her parents and those who had educated her.

But none of this did we notice as children; later on, however, when life little by little opened my eyes to most things I began to fathom my mother's real character and the moral conflicts that she had been through, and how she never really felt at peace with herself.

She clung to her Church with all her soul, and no matter in what house she lived, a little Orthodox chapel was erected in some corner of it, and she always kept in her service a Russian priest and two chanters who followed her wherever she went.

We children were brought up in the Anglican Church, and I believe it was a lifelong grief to my mother that we were Protestants. Sometimes, though, she would take us into her little chapel, where, awed by the mystery of rites foreign to us, we stood gazing as in a trance at the precious icons, at the wondrous three-doored screen which shut off the altar, inhaling the heady fragrance of the incense and listening with

beating hearts to the grave, soul-stirring Russian chants. The Russian language is the language of languages for song, and Russia is the country for stupendous bass voices.

The mystical atmosphere of these little sanctuaries impressed me deeply. I never felt an urge to change my own religion for that of my mother; but standing beside her whilst she prayed and devoutly crossed herself in her own chapel, made me feel very near the Holy of Holies, and the ardent expression of belief lighting up my mother's face during these services, moved me in a way difficult to describe.

The fact that she worshipped God in a way different from us, surrounded her in my imagination with a special nimbus; it made her just a little unapproachable, strange, not quite belonging to the everyday world. Scrupulously respecting the faith we were christened in, she rather shunned speaking of religion with us, fearing perhaps to influence us in any way. But there was also, I think, a feeling that we might not understand the beauty of her cult, that we might not approach with sufficient reverence that which was so fundamentally part of her inner being. So a certain shyness always existed between us when discussing or referring to religious matters.

Curiously enough, fate was later on to put the same problems before me, only the other way round.

I always remained a staunch Protestant, but all my six children were christened in my mother's religion as it is the official religion of their country, and it was one of my mother's most excruciating anxieties to see if her daughter would be equal to the difficult task, always fearing that I might not feel sufficient reverence for her Church, which she instinctively considered superior to mine.

I shall return later to religious questions as I have pondered much over them, coming to my own conclusions. I would, however, like to say here that my children and I never had that same diffidence about discussing religious questions as my mother and I had, for nowadays children and parents speak more easily to each other.

My mother had been brought up with the conception that generations must be kept strictly apart, and any more familiar attitude of child towards parent was in her eyes a want of respect.

Even now, one of my deepest regrets is that because I was her daugh-

ter she never admitted, even when I was forty, that I should discuss things with her as though we were equals. She would not bridge the generations.

And yet I have the feeling that both of us would have found infinite comfort in discussing life's problems together, in mutually confessing to each other what we had found hard or perplexing on our so different roads, both of us having married into foreign lands.

Because of that attitude of hers I seldom dared approach her for advice, because I always to a certain degree had to keep on a mask whilst with her, because she never lifted hers.

Many a useless little comedy have we thus played to each other, she pretending not to know those things she knew as well as I did, and what was worse, knew that I knew that she knew! And yet our masks were on all the time.

Had she the same desire as I had to tear them off? This has remained unanswered. Yet I dare to say that had she only been able to treat me as a woman, forgetting that I was her daughter, I might at times even have been a help, because my none too easy apprenticeship in a far-off country had taught me much; but to the very end she would admit of no wisdom coming out of the mouth of the babe she had brought into the world.

Nowadays we talk freely with our children, we let them have ideas of their own, we will even occasionally allow them to give us a lead; we do not abuse our rights as elders, we have more sympathy with their struggles, conflicts and desires. Are we preparing a stronger and better generation? I wonder. Sometimes perhaps we swing too far round in the other direction, we recognize *too many* rights, too much freedom; but that may also come from the fact that parents themselves do not grow old as quickly as in our times; they feel themselves to be no more than middle-aged much longer than used to be the case.

About all these problems I have my ideas, and through having lived, seen and felt, I have come to many a conclusion, but I shall never in this one small book be able to relate, explain or argue out all that I have thought and learnt.

But suppose we now come back to Queen Victoria.

Many have already written about that great little woman, have de-

scribed her, dissected her character, her reign, her personal value. Far be it from me to want to paint any other picture of her than the one that fitted into my life, the picture of her as my childish eyes saw her and in later years the eyes of a woman, young and far away from her native land. In these days she was following my career with grandmotherly affection, but also with the anxious severity of one who wished that those of her House should do it every honour, no matter where they were placed.

Dear old Grandmamma, with her crinoline-like black silk dresses, her white widow's cap, her shy little laugh and that little shrug of the shoulders which had become almost a trick, what a wonderful, unforgettable little lady she was.

The hush round Grandmamma's door was awe-inspiring, it was like approaching the mystery of some sanctuary.

Silent, soft-carpeted corridors led to Grandmamma's apartments which were somehow always approached from afar off, and those that led the way towards them, were they servant, lady or maid, talked in hushed voices and trod softly as though with felt soles.

One door after another opened noiselessly, it was like passing through the forecourts of a temple, before approaching the final mystery to which only the initiated had access.

Wonderful little old Grandmamma, who though such a small, unimposing little woman to look at should have known so extraordinarily how to inspire reverential fear. Our nurses would drive us along before them like a troop of well-behaved little geese, they too having suddenly become soft-tongued and even their scoldings were as words breathed through a flannel so that all sharpness was taken out of their voices of reproof.

When finally the door was opened there sat Grandmamma not idol-like at all, not a bit frightening, smiling a kind little smile, almost as shy as us children, so that conversation was not very fluent on either side.

Inquiry as to our morals and general behaviour made up a great part of it, and I well remember Grandmamma's shocked and yet amused little exclamations of horror when it was reported that one or the other of us had not been good.

I have a sort of feeling that Grandmamma as well as ourselves was secretly relieved when the audience was over.

But there was a wonderful charm about Grandmamma's rooms which always smelt deliciously of orange-flowers, even when there were no orange-flowers about the place.

First and foremost there were portraits of Grandpapa, portraits of every kind. Pictures and prints, statues, statuettes and photographs. There was Grandpapa in full general's uniform. Grandpapa in his robes of the Order of the Garter, Grandpapa in kilt, in plain clothes, Grandpapa on horse-back, at his writing-table, Grandpapa with his dogs, with his children, in the garden, on the mountains. Grandpapa with important-looking papers in his hands, Grandpapa with his loving wife gazing enraptured up into his face. Grandpapa was certainly the first and foremost spirit of these rooms.

Then they were so excitingly full of every imaginable treasure, from the glass ball in which many colours could be seen, to the wonderful pictures by Landseer of dogs, ponies and deer. And so many photographs, amongst others mysterious photographs of dead people, even of dead little children which, although they made us feel creepy, we always furtively looked at again and again. Then there were all sorts of delicious queer little objects made of Scotch granite and cairngorm. And above all there was Grandmamma's bullfinch, such an angry little fellow, who became thin with rage, and screeched at you when you stuck your finger in between the bars of his cage; but when he liked someone, he puffed himself up till he looked like a round ball of fluff and then he piped softly and enchantingly a gay little tune he had been taught.

Once upon a time I had a little bullfinch like Grandmamma's, but that was much later and is a sad little story, oh, so sad, and does not fit in here.

These explorations round about Grandmamma's rooms could only take place if it was Mamma who went with us, because then Grandmamma talked with Mamma instead of with us, and their conversations were more lengthy and more substantial, giving us time for our voyages of discovery.

It is especially the Windsor rooms and corridors I remember; at Osborne and Balmoral Grandmamma generally used to be met outside.

Like all overworked people Grandmamma loved to escape at certain hours of the day from the hushed "royalness" of her apartments, so

whenever weather permitted she would take her breakfast and tea out of doors.

It is principally at Frogmore and Osborne that I see Grandmamma at breakfast under a large écru green-lined and green-fringed parasol which had been fixed into the ground.

Here, too, everybody approaching her trod softly, but it was on emerald-green lawns instead of carpets, and in the open air one was less afraid of the sound of one's own voice.

A delicious fragrance of coffee and of a certain brown biscuit which came in flat round tins from Germany was characteristic of Grandmamma's breakfast. Our greedy little noses sniffed it in longingly, but it was not always that we were invited to have a taste.

Grey-kilted and green-kilted Highlanders or white-turbaned Indians mostly seemed to be attending to Grandmamma's wants, though the tall monumental footmen also had their place in the picture, I remember, as had also the numerous dogs: collies, Skye, Scotch and rough-haired terriers, and above all the adorable cream-coloured pony with pink nose and ruby-red eyes, harnessed to Grandmamma's pony carriage, the exact replica in miniature of the huge state horses that were harnessed to Grandmamma's golden coach when she drove to Parliament or to Westminster Abbey on days when great events took place.

Oh, that cream-coloured pony, he has haunted many of my childish visions. In dreamland I possessed him, I even rode him through marvelous countries, over the classical seven hills and seven dells in the land of fairies. Swift as the wind was his gallop, no noise did his four hoofs make, whilst mane and tail were real rivers of light.

The moment breakfast was over cups, plates, coffee and tea-pots were cleared away to make room for innumerable leather dispatch boxes. Each box had a protruding slip of paper, indicating the contents I suppose.

These dispatch boxes seemed almost a part of Grandmamma herself.

Osborne! The very name is still a joy. It meant summer holidays, it meant the sea and the seashore, it meant wonderful shells to be found when the tide was low, shells of every colour and shape. It meant glorious bathing when the tide was high, and drives in the big "wagonette,"

as we called our brake, through the sweet-smelling woods, past hedges full of honeysuckle.

And it meant dear old Grandmamma Queen in the background. Grandmamma Queen at breakfast under her *écru* green-fringed parasol, surrounded by dogs, Indians, Highlanders, and also an aunt or two in nervous attendance or occasionally a curtsyng lady-in-waiting, in correct black, all smiles and with the mellowed voice usual to those who served or attended to the great little old lady.

It also meant the beautiful terraces in front of Osborne House where the big magnolias grew against the walls, those giant magnolias which had a lemon-like fragrance and into which you could bury your whole face, but which you never dared pick, because they were far too precious and exotic for childish plunder. Even when faded and their petals turned to a sort of leathery brown, they still kept their delicious scent and then their curious hard-pointed centres became very prominent; they really were mystery flowers, as also were the passion flowers with their cross in the centre and the many stamens laid flat in a perfect circle like the wheels of a watch. There was also jasmine on those terraces and jasmine has always filled me with a sort of ecstasy.

That feeling of ecstasy over flowers has always been one of the enchantments of life; I feel it to-day as I did then. It is a sort of rapture, a sort of prayer-like gratitude for something which delights soul as well as body, eyes as well as heart.

I must speak of that curious sensation of ecstasy that certain things always gave me. Once, much later, talking them over with my sister Ducky, I found that she had almost always felt the same raptures I had for exactly the same things.

It was a sort of tightening of the heartstrings, something that brought tears to your eyes and at the same time made you want to shout with joy or fall on your knees and worship or sing hymns of praise and thanksgiving.

The causes responsible for these ecstasies were manifold and varied. Some had to do entirely with the eyes, some with scent, some with sound, some entirely with feeling. These were more mysterious and less easy to fathom.

When I begin to sum up my childish ecstasies, many will make you

smile, but they were so strong that even to-day I have only to shut my eyes and they still take hold of me with the same power as then.

There was for instance the indescribable thrill of reaching the Osborne beach at low tide; the stepping out of the wagonette before the coastguard's little castle, with the ever-renewed possibility before us of finding wonderful shells.

The sand lay white, damp and smooth beneath our bare feet and half buried in this sand were these treasures only waiting for discovery. It was always Ducky and I who shared these raptures.

Our hearts beat, our eyes glowed; each step might mean marvellous discovery. The fan shells were what we searched for especially, and one day I found a broad, pink fan shell, pale rose pink, with deeper markings; it was a stupendous find, much bigger than the fan shells generally picked up on the Osborne beach, more like shells found in the tropics. Ducky and I considered this find almost a miracle, it was a red-letter day, a date always to be remembered; and others envied my luck.

But now you may smile when I mention another of my several ecstasies, thrills you might almost call them.

Mamma had two pairs of magnificent coal-black Orloff trotters, which Prince Orloff himself had given her as a present when she was in Russia.

Their coats were incredibly shiny, like polished marble, and when they moved, blue lights played about on their glossy flanks. Our coachman was called Robert. He was a wizened little man with a thin set face that had a sort of frozen smile at one corner of his mouth. He drove with impeccable English correctness though he always leaned a wee bit towards the off-side; that was a characteristic of his; of course we children loved Robert.

The most beautiful of these Orloff trotters was called Viceroy, but in the stables he had the nickname of Skitty because he was skittish and difficult to handle. Skitty was the object of our deepest adoration. Everything was perfection in Skitty, the way he held his head, tossing the foam from his jingling bit, the way he lifted his knees, the marvellous line of his rounded flanks, but—and now comes my ecstasy—there was a wave in his mane as he curved his beautiful neck, a sort of ripple

that ran over it whilst he trotted and that I could just see if I bent right out over the side of the wagonette to watch it.

No position was too dangerous if I could only catch a glimpse of Skitty's curved neck and that ripple in his mane as he trotted. It was a sort of rapture that cannot be described or explained, but only felt from the crown of your head to the tip of your toes. It was ecstasy in fact: that is the only word that describes it.

You can laugh to your heart's content; I am well aware that it is absurd, but that curve of Skitty's blue-black neck was and has remained in memory, one of my most exquisite ecstasies.

There was also the deep, soul-satisfying ecstasy of the wild rose, pink and frail, with a perfume so delicate that it might have been distilled by the Fairy Queen herself. In fact the wild rose was a fairy flower and has always remained so. And also the primroses in the copses, those rounded pale yellow bunches, nestling amongst last year's fallen rust-coloured leaves.

There are no primroses in Roumania, but a few years ago when my daughter married and went to Serbia, I found primroses in all the woods round about Belgrade.

My delight was so great that my children always invite me for the primrose season and those delicate pale bunches, rising from the rust-coloured ground, still ravish me to-day as they did in those far-off days of Eastwell, Windsor and Devonport, the three chief places where we used to pick primroses.

Blessed, blessed faculty that God has given me of being able to thrill with every drop of my blood, with heart, soul and senses, to feel, adore, rejoice and give thanks!

But now a humble confession! Although this sounds horribly material, I have also known ecstasy of taste!

I was never a specially greedy child, but all the same certain tastes could induce the same rapture as scents, sounds or sights, and these tastes have also remained unforgettable.

There were, for instance, certain little sweets only to be had at the Russian Court. These were wee double round fondants made of fresh strawberries and served up in tiny paper baskets. Their colour was as

exquisite as their taste. The very moment when you lifted them off the dish on to your plate was one of enchantment, your mouth watered even before you tasted them. The "fore-pleasure," as the Germans would express it, was almost as wonderful as the actual eating of the sweets. This was fairy food, and whenever I told a story to myself or to my sisters, my imaginary personages always ate these super-exquisite sweets.

Two more "tastes" have remained with me as a delicious memory. One was at Queen Victoria's table.

Every Sunday Grandmamma had more or less the same menu served, which had roast beef as *pièce de résistance*, and "Mehlbrei" as sweet dish.

This was almost a nursery dish and when it had to receive an elegant French name the cooks would call it *bouillie de farine à la vanille*. But Grandmamma, who was sentimental about all things pertaining to Germany, admitted German names on her menu, so plain "Mehlbrei" was allowed.

The deliciousness of this "Mehlbrei" was heightened by little diamond-shaped pieces of brown skin which floated on the top. The taste of these little squares of skin, which was simply the top part of the *bouillie* slightly burnt, belonged to those things that for some reason gave my palate exquisite satisfaction. I would shut my eyes and let the wee morsel lie for a moment on my tongue so as to taste it to the utmost.

The tragedy was that there were very few of these floating little squares in each dish, and as I was very young I was of course served one of the last and it more than once happened that when my turn came, the little squares had all been already consumed by those luckier and more privileged than I. In fact, to be accurate, I think only once did I taste of this ambrosial food, but the memory has remained for ever, so it must have been specially exquisite.

And there is still one last "taste" I must mention.

This last was at Coburg where we had an old nursery footman named Wiener. Wiener was as excellent as he was undecorative. But he had a warm heart and he loved children, and like all people who have a soft spot in their hearts for the little ones, he liked to feed them on good food.

Now Wiener had a cousin who kept the restaurant at the Kalenberg (the Kalenberg being one of the royal castles beyond the town). Like all self-respecting German castles the Kalenberg stood on a hill, and at its foot, in accordance with Teutonic tradition, there was a restaurant where the worthy burghers made merry on high days and holidays, and Wiener's cousin ran this plebeian "Kaffee" as it was also called, and this cousin made a special sort of cake.

If you have never tasted the Kalenberg cake, it is no good trying to make you understand its perfection.

It was delicious beyond description and its rareness added to its value, for it was only occasionally that Wiener's Kalenberg cousin would send the little princesses one of these dream cakes.

To look at the Kalenberg cake was in no way wonderful. It was a plain brown cake, just like the cakes you see in the pictures in all German children's books, in "Struw-welpeter" for instance. The sort of cake that Fidgety Phil drags off the table with him when he collapses under the tablecloth, after a special fit of the fidgets and his mother, aghast, contemplates the disaster through her "lorgnon."

The Kalenberg cake had no raisins in it, and it was into the bargain called, I believe, "Gesundheitskuchen," which ought to have robbed it of all its charm, but its crust especially had just that something about it that made it more luscious than any other "living" cake.

I would eat my slice deliberately, with a slowness which was infinitely greedier than any gobbling, and I would nibble it away gradually to the top where resided the *summum bonum* of taste. This very last top bit of the Kalenberg cake belongs to the same category of "ecstasy" as did the strawberry fondants and the little squares of burnt skin on Grandmamma's Sunday "Mehlbrei." But they had also something of the thrill, though more material, I confess, that the primroses, the wild roses and Skitty's mane gave me, Skitty who was really called Viceroy according to the enamelled plaque over his box.

Those who have similar remembrances of their childhood will understand what I mean, those who have not must just forgive me my trivial digression and turn to another page.

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CHAPTER II

OSBORNE COTTAGE

BUT I am not yet finished with Osborne, for there is real relish in bringing to light these dear buried memories which are such a happy background to a life which was destined to be lived in a country so far from the land of my birth.

We inhabited Osborne Cottage, a delightful little house just beyond the royal park which Grandmamma Queen lent us occasionally for the summer months.

Mamma loved the Isle of Wight, whilst other members of the Royal Family declared that the climate of Osborne was too relaxing. I particularly remember the word "relaxing," which I did not like because it had a sound of pills and medicine about it, a sound as of doses given by Nana of an evening when your inside was upset.

Evidently Mamma liked a relaxing climate, declaring that she did not care to be blown to pieces in what English people called "bracing" places, where you could not keep a hat upon your head.

Mamma was very funny about her hats. Altogether, indeed, she had strange ideas about clothes because, it must be confessed, Mamma was always just a little in opposition to the times. It seemed to give her a particular satisfaction to consider yesterday much better than to-day, and I have known her bitterly regret a fashion of yesterday, which she had loudly denounced with hoots of disapproval when it had been the fashion of to-day!

Mamma had, for instance, a strange idea that she could only stick a pin into her hat on the right side. She had never, she said, learned in her youth how to put in a pin with the left hand, she had never done it in Russia and she was not going to try and do it either in England, Germany or Malta. For such was my Mamma, and no one could more persistently stick to her convictions and principles even when they made her thoroughly uncomfortable.

In later years these little idiosyncrasies narrowed her life down most unnecessarily till she became something of an original.

Anyhow, because Mamma had never learnt in Russia how to put two pins into her hat, she hated the wind with the healthy hate she put into all her hatreds through life. There was nothing half-hearted about Mamma: what she liked she liked, innovations were abhorrent to her, and she preferred places where she had not to "dress up," as she called it.

She wore practical skirts, jackets and hats, though she always stuck to funny-shaped boots with little leather bows on their tips, boots that were ordered in St. Petersburg, and she had them specially made the same for each foot, declaring that it was nonsense to imagine that you needed a left and right shoe, it was much more rational to have them both alike.

It was only much later that I understood that Mamma was really somewhat of a character, to use a literary expression. As a child I imagined that everybody had those ideas, and those strong likes and dislikes which often isolated her from her neighbours.

No one could tell a story better than Mamma. She was a wonderful conversationalist and could keep a whole table amused. She used to encourage us to talk and entertain people, always declaring that nothing was more hopeless than a princess who never opened her mouth. "Besides," she added, "it is very rude and please remember that, my dear children."

I have remembered it all through my life.

Another thing she was very severe about was that when invited out somewhere for a meal you must never refuse a dish set before you, even if you did not like it, because she declared that nothing was so insulting to a hostess as not eating the good things that she provided.

"But if they are not good, Mamma?"

"Then you must just behave as though they were good."

"But if they make you feel sick!"

"Then be sick, my dear, but wait till you get home. It would be most offensive to be sick then and there!"

This was Mamma's good advice. Something of a Spartan, she expected her children to follow her lead.

Mamma hated anyone to be ill. She herself had marvellous health

that she handed on to me, for which I thank her every day of my life as the greatest of my blessings.

According to Mamma's code one must never complain. A headache must never be confessed or given way to, a cold did not keep you at home, a fever did not send you to bed. Yet no one had such an eagle eye as Mamma. She spotted the smallest indisposition and was always at hand with pills or medicines.

She declared that English doses were much stronger than continental doses and she used to call them "*des remèdes de cheval*."

Mamma spoke perfect English, but preferred French, declaring that it was by far the most elegant language and that a beautiful letter could only be written in French. She did not, however, particularly care for the French as a people, preferring the English, Russians and Germans.

We children hated speaking French; we considered it an affected language, a language for grown-ups, not for children, and we wilfully threw away all the good opportunities of absorbing the language properly.

This exasperated Mamma, who said we were little fools, which, no doubt, we were, only we did not like to be told so.

"Children," Mamma would say, when giving some of her Spartan advice, "don't let English people persuade you that certain foods are indigestible; everything is digestible for a good stomach, but English people spoil their digestion from earliest childhood by imagining that they cannot eat this or that. I always ate everything; in Russia no one ever spoke about their digestions, it's a most unpleasant subject and not drawing-room conversation." All this proving that Mamma herself had an excellent Russian digestion.

Once with the greatest satisfaction Mamma declared: "Missy" (that was I) "is like me, she can eat stones and feel none the worse for it."

Without doubt this Russian peculiarity, handed down to me from my Russian ancestors, has been a great asset all through my life.

Mamma had an old maid called Fanny Renwick. She was a great character. She was dark and had a moustache and liked to imagine that Spanish blood flowed in her veins. I doubt if her forbears had come from Spain but there might have been an Irishman amongst them.

Fanny ruled us with a rod of iron. We loved and we hated her in turns. Her humours changed like the weather, but on sunny days she was most affable.

Fanny looked after Mamma's wardrobe and laid in stores of all that Mamma might need. There was a Russian largeness about the size of these needs.

It was a wonderful day when we caught Fanny inspecting her stores; there were cupboards and cupboards of them and these cupboards smelt delicious.

Here were endless rows of scents, boxes of "sachets," cold cream, soap, rose-water, but nothing in the form of cosmetics, which Mamma abhorred as violently as the prophets of old denouncing the Jezebels of their time.

There were incredible provisions of pills, especially castor-oil pills that looked like transparent white grapes with the oil moving about inside. These for some reason were always ordered in St. Petersburg, perhaps for fear of their being "*des remèdes de cheval*" if ordered in England.

I think these castor-oil pills mostly dried up in their boxes, because Mamma's Russian digestion hardly justified the ordering of such an enormous quantity. But as they were sent all the way from the Russian capital, perhaps it was more practical to have a great provision sent at one time. I think that Mamma had no idea of the miraculous stores that she had in her cupboards; Fanny had a free hand in the ordering.

The most enchanting of Fanny's provisions were the "smoking pastilles." These were of every sort. Some were tiny and of every colour of the rainbow, others were pink, half-moon shaped, packed in small flat boxes with an Oriental name on the top and for some reason the picture of a small gazelle. There were also heart-shaped lavender-coloured pastilles that tasted of violets. I think I liked these best, and on fine-weather days, the moustachioed, Spanish-looking Fanny was very generous with Her Imperial Highness's stores.

Big sachets like little mattresses, blue or pink, hung or lay between all Mamma's dresses or linen. These were filled with iris powder and were always sent from Florence where they were made.

Fanny Renwick was a tyrant. All royal head-maids become tyrants,

however humble may have been their beginnings. It is also quite a tradition that they should quarrel with and even illtreat those under them, especially the second-in-command.

Later, Mamma had a second maid called Jolly, but that was after my days at home. Anyone less jolly than Jolly could not be imagined, but when Fanny was pensioned, Jolly became the tyrant over others, and martyred them as she had been martyred, but even this agreeable advancement did not make Jolly any the jollier.

Fanny's Spanish ancestors were perhaps responsible for a certain sense of humour in her; there could be a wink in old Fanny's eye sometimes that made it possible with a little imagination to think of her in a black mantilla with a red flower behind her ear, smiling at a dago. Not so, Jolly! Her grimness was that of the Quaker or the Huguenot and I think that no cavalier would ever have dared to smile at *her*.

Later, Jolly became the great chum of my children, but she kept sister Baby (Beatrice) strictly in order, thoroughly disapproving of the Duchess's youngest daughter who was longest at home.

Osborne Cottage was a typical English cottage overshadowed by lime trees, and honeysuckle nodding in at its windows. These were two more scents that filled me with beatitude. Ever afterwards, no matter where I was, the perfume of lime trees in full bloom carried me back to Osborne Cottage, just as the smell of damp autumn leaves ever conjures up again the Eastwell woods before me as with a magic wand.

It was always in the season of lime trees in flower and of honeysuckle that we came to the Isle of Wight.

The hall of Osborne Cottage was always full of white lilies with pink spots, which also had a perfume that regularly tingled all through me in shudders of delight. They stood in great pots near the staircase and the first thing we did on arriving was to bury our noses in them, staining our faces with their pollen till we looked like little Red Indians.

Our French governess, whom we called Mademoiselle, was an Alsatian. She had her holiday during the summer months. Mademoiselle had experienced the siege of Strasbourg in 1870, and harboured a healthy hatred against the Germans, which she implanted in us for many years.

She knew how to fire our imagination and told stories very well. We



UNCLE PAUL—MY MOTHER'S YOUNGEST BROTHER

MY SISTERS AND I



liked and disliked her in turns. She had a rather large nose and smiled in a way that made her lips spread all over her face. It was an ugly smile. Also her hair was poor and had an ugly colour. She would read to us by the hour, a great quality, because we were greedy for stories of every kind. She initiated us into the charms of "La Bibliothèque Rose" (of which "Les Mémoires d'un Ane" was our favourite), of "Sans Famille," "Robinson Suisse," and later into the joys of "Les Enfants du Capitaine Grant."

It was considered healthy for us and good for our growing backs to lie flat on the floor for about an hour a day. Mademoiselle used to read to us whilst we underwent this daily trial. She kept on knitting stockings whilst she read. I remember watching her from my position beneath her, trying to reverse her face, making of her nose a chin, and a chin of her nose, but she remained hopelessly homely, as the Americans so politely call "ugly," whichever way I imagined her face.

Stocking-knitting was for some reason considered a virtuous occupation for little girls. The turning of the heel, the decreasing and increasing it involved was comparable only to the geography of Switzerland and the Alps, with the lakes on both sides of these troublesome mountains. I cannot explain why, but there was always some connexion in my mind between the two. Later on Queen Victoria had a picture made of me by Millais, knitting a green stocking, which still hangs somewhere in Windsor Castle.

Mademoiselle possessed certain treasures we loved to look at; one was a little crystal locket with a sort of flat bird on it, in small blackish diamonds with a wee pearl hanging from its beak, the other was a little amethyst seal with a plaintive-looking pansy engraved upon it. A great treat was to be allowed to seal our letters with this pansy-crest.

There was also a certain sort of biscuit Mademoiselle used to send for from Strasbourg, which was the quintessence of all that was excellent.

Mademoiselle certainly had a certain fascination for us, but she was not absolutely loyal to our mother, and for this we judged her with our childish instinct of fair play. She was too often inclined to belittle or criticize "la Duchesse" to her own children.

It was of course a great delight to be governessless during the Osborne holidays. Mamma and the nursery maids looked after us and

took us out with the occasional help of M. de Morsier, Alfred's French tutor.

He was supposed to polish up our French during the holidays, and the unfortunate man, who was round, blue-eyed and smiling, had an awful time of it trying to give us "*des dictées*" in the garden, whilst we were always escaping from him to climb trees, from the branches of which we would look down on him, playing him no end of tricks. But M. Edouard de Morsier never denounced us; he was a good sport, and I have the feeling that he was secretly in sympathy with our pranks. I do not suppose he enjoyed the *dictées* any more than we did.

About this time I remember the visit of Winston Churchill as a little boy. He was red-haired, freckled and impudent, with a fine disdain for authority. He and I had a sneaking liking for each other. At first we did not dare to show it openly, but by degrees our red-haired guest threw away all pretence and brazenly admitted his preference for me, declaring before witnesses that when he was grown up he would marry me!

I do not think that Mamma considered that he improved our manners, but personally I have kept a very pleasant memory of that short visit young Winston paid us, and can still smile to-day when remembering the sly look of his eyes, with a snub nose set very pugnaciously between them and his impudent expression when reproved.

I very much liked to be as capable as the boys, as quick, as nimble, as untiring, but I was very much a little girl as regards my feelings towards them and theirs towards me.

I remember once at Clarence House, my brother had some boys to come and play with him. This did not happen very often, but on this memorable occasion I can still see a boy I inordinately admired. He was dressed as a Gordon Highlander, was dark and remarkably good-looking and he was called Stephen—Stephen Hastings, I believe, but of that I am not sure. The boys were being very wild together, rushing about the corridors and our nurses considered the games too rough for little girls. With great longing we sisters were watching them from our nursery door. I had eyes only for Stephen.

Amongst others, a splendid game was invented; sliding down the back-stairs on a tea-tray.

This was too wonderful! Overcoming all shyness, and ignoring strict prohibition, I sidled up to the handsome Stephen and begged him to let me ride down with him on a tray. Stephen was a real cavalier and was only too pleased to be the brave driver of a fair-haired little girl who was more nervous than she dared show. I have no clear remembrance how our joint undertaking succeeded: it is only Stephen's face that I remember and his dark green, black and yellow kilt.

Of course Stephen might easily have refused to take a girl down on his tray with him, but he did not, for which I am grateful to him to this day.

Think of what a cruel snub it would have been had he said "No."

I never saw Stephen again and I have no idea whose son he was and how he came to be invited that day. But he is one of my pleasant memories for all that.

Close to Osborne Park there was another park. The front gates of the two large properties stood, as far as I remember, almost opposite each other, or side by side, but I may be mistaken in this as it is so long since I was there.

Norris Castle was the name of this other place and one year the Empress Frederick, my father's eldest sister, and mother of the Kaiser, had leased it for the summer. Norris Castle was closer to the sea than Osborne House; it was a large place built in grey stone in the same style as Windsor, it seemed to me. But my remembrance of it is vague except that I thought it extraordinarily beautiful and that there were peacocks strutting about in all their glory on the terraces. It was the first time I heard peacocks calling and ever since the call of the peacock has reminded me of Norris Castle.

I remember the Empress Frederick all in black with several daughters around her. Her eyes were extraordinarily blue, her voice enticing and her smile perfectly delightful. There was great harmony between her smile and her eyes, both were astonishingly bright and alive. She was exceedingly sweet with us children and asked us many questions. She spoke English with a strong foreign accent, but her voice was very much like my father's, a soft voice with rather slurred "r's," which both of them rolled in the same way. What I cannot at all remember is if this was before or after the Emperor Frederick's death, if she was al-

ready a widow or not. But I think it was in the Jubilee year because I do just remember the Emperor Frederick, then still Crown Prince, on the Osborne beach, and that he was already voiceless.

He was a tall, good-looking man, with a very full chestnut beard. He could not talk to us, but I remember how he pretended to bombard us with sand and dry seaweed. He was jolly and yet one somehow felt he was condescending, which made us feel shy.

I can remember another time seeing the Crown Prince Frederick and Aunt Vicky at the Neue Palais, Potsdam. It is only a faint recollection; one or two pictures only remain and these quite blurred, nor can I remember in what year we were there, or why; it must have been on the way to somewhere else, just in passing. But I see Aunt Vicky's wonderful smile. Curiously enough, although it lit up her whole face and her eyes like a light, there was also something of a bite about her smile.

Aunt Elisabeth of Roumania (Carmen Sylva) had also this sort of smile. It was extraordinarily luminous; hers also was a wonderful smile, but if I may so express it, it was more luminous than warm. There was something *voulu* about both their smiles, they were, so to say, "turned on," like electric light. And when they showed great amusement or appreciation, you never felt absolutely convinced that they *were* really amused; there was a little bit of stage setting about it; their smile was too much at their disposal—it had, in fact, become a mannerism.

I may be making a mistake in the Empress Frederick's case. I knew her so very little, but that is how, in my half-effaced memory, her smile "felt."

It may here be added that Queen Elisabeth of Roumania and the Empress Frederick, in spite of the similarity of their smiles, had no sympathy for each other. They were both learned women, with a tendency towards the "blue stocking," rather eager to demonstrate their superiority over commoner mortals. They were both of them ambitious and *tatkräftig*, which is the exact expression I need in describing them, meaning that they were forcible, incisive, penetrating, and that they could always leave well alone.

A more material memory of that passing glimpse, at the Neue Palais, of Aunt Vicky's smile, is a curious soup that was served to us at lunch; it was white and sweet and had raisins in it. We were told that it was

a North German soup. We were not sure that we liked it; for some reason it was called "Biersuppe." And then there was the *Kotputzer Baumkuchen*, also a North German product; a high round cake in the form of a tree trunk, with little projections sticking out all over it, which we called "noses." It was covered with a thick, hard, white sugar. The inside was dark brown and supremely delicious. Here once more I have the vision of Aunt Vicky's radiant smile whilst cutting great slices of this cake for each of us. Somehow Aunt Vicky was *too* nice to you. Her smile had something in it of sunshine when the weather is not really warm. The Roumanians have an excellent expression for that sort of sun, they call it *soare cu dinti*, meaning "sunshine with teeth."

But let me insist upon the fact that I have no reason for thus judging Aunt Vicky's smile; it was simply a child's impression that stuck. But as I once mentioned, I had always all my days a curious instinct for feeling depths beneath depths, reason within reason, a sort of seventh sense in fact.

Certain afternoons during the summers at Osborne were spent at the so-called "Swiss Cottage." This was a place of supreme enchantment, quite one of my dearest recollections.

A little house of dark wood, built in the rustic Swiss chalet style, a low-drooping roof with stones on the top and a balcony round the upper story. This had been the playhouse of Queen Victoria's nine children.

There was a large space all round it where our father, uncles and aunts had each had their little strip of garden, which they were supposed to have planted themselves; long rectangular patches in which both flowers and vegetables grew. These little gardens were still faithfully kept as they were in the time when they had been the playground of an older generation, now long past the "golden age," and probably better kept now than in those days.

To us children these garden plots were the ideal of all childish ambitions, and I remember asking the custodian over and over again which had been Papa's garden, and that bed, of course, although exactly like all the others, was the object of our special interest.

It was here in the gardens of the Swiss Cottage that I discovered for the first time the tall Madonna lily (*Lilium Candidum*). It was a revelation to me. Never in memory had I seen flowers more perfectly beau-

tiful; noble, stately, with that something almost sacred about them, probably because of their association with holy pictures. And then their scent! Penetratingly sweet beyond words, a heady smell that almost made you a little dizzy or faint. There is a whole world in the perfume of the Madonna lily, something biblical, legendary and almost too good to be true. Besides, they are so tall, so graceful and so shiny that their petals seem to exude light.

Ever since I discovered the marvel of those white lilies in the Swiss Cottage garden I have tried to plant them wherever I made a garden. Sometimes I succeeded, and sometimes I failed. Quite lately I have succeeded far beyond my dearest expectations, and that is at Balcic, on a terrace overlooking the Black Sea. Here to my infinite joy they sprang up gloriously, white miracles of light. But although a whole lifetime lies between that lily walk in far Dobrogea and those first lilies I ever saw, in Papa's little garden plot, the scent of the Madonna lily always carries me back to the Swiss Cottage in the Isle of Wight.

How astonishing is the strength of memory! I mention it again, because it is so haunting, that strange force that scents possess, conjuring up as with a magic wand long-forgotten pictures. Pictures of places, of faces, of words spoken, of thoughts thought . . . Visions, beauty, delight.

The charm of memory—but also its sadness and nostalgia for all that is past, irrevocably past, never to come again, and yet alive in one's heart, unforgettable, a treasure one lives with all the days of one's life.

There was also a tiny fortress built in the Swiss Cottage grounds. A wee red-brick fortress with trenches all round representing moats.

Great games were played in this fortress. Brother Alfred was the principal leader. Alfred played a great part during these Osborne holidays, and was the leader and instigator of most of our games. During the "learning" months of the year we saw less of him.

In the lower part of the Swiss Cottage was a museum where each of the nine children had accumulated treasures of every kind, brought home from their different voyages, round the world or otherwise. This museum was an endless source of interest, and here Ducky and I discovered the most beautiful fan shells imaginable. They made our mouths water and we dreamed of what the ecstasy would be were we

to find such shells on the Osborne beach. Alas, they were all behind glass doors, not to be touched, a very wise precaution, for our childish fingers would certainly otherwise have handled these hoarded treasures with too much eagerness.

But when the custodian was in a good humour, like Fanny Renwick on her "fine-weather days," he would unlock one or other of the glass doors and lay the most admired treasures for a moment in our hands. Thus I once held the most beautiful of all the fan shells on my chubby palm; it was a mysterious dark red but marked like tortoise-shell and of all marvels, it was double and had little spikes all over it. It was pure bliss to be allowed to touch it for a few moments.

Here I also saw for the first time those lovely blue Brazilian butterflies, with wings like azure-tinted mother-of-pearl. They always seemed the very quintessence of blue, so to say, the supremest and most perfect expression of that colour which is the sky's and the sea's at their best.

All through my life it was my dream to have live blue butterflies of that sort flying about my rooms. Tame azure butterflies like blue lights! I imagined that I would keep them alive by having bowls of white roses on my tables, on my floor, on my window-sill, giant white roses covered with dew. In the wonderful stories I told myself, and which sometimes even to-day I can imagine with all the ardour of yore, there are nearly always these blue butterflies flying about my rooms, drinking in life off snow-white roses standing in the sun.

One of the great rarities of the Swiss Cottage museum was a flexible stone. Rectangular and sand-coloured, like a large piece of shortbread, it swayed slightly up and down when held at one end. Of course we were never allowed to hold this precious mineral in our own hands; I suppose any too rough handling would have made it break off. But no visit to the museum was ever quite complete unless this miraculous stone was lifted from its place of repose.

I wonder if the flexible stone is still in the Swiss Cottage and if the Madonna lilies, once the joy of nine brothers and sisters of whom only three are still alive, are still blooming in the small garden plots?

Mamma, because she did not like "dressing up," did not much care about Cowes week. But we considered it supremely exciting and we loved being invited on the *Victoria and Albert*, the royal yacht which

Uncle Bertie and Aunt Alix, as far as I can remember, used to inhabit during this week. (Or was it the dear old *Alexandra*?)

Nothing was ever quite so wonderful as an English ship. Man-of-war or yacht, both were equally entrancing and no sailor the wide world over can come up to the British blue-jacket. All sailors are delightful, but the British blue-jacket has that something more which makes of him an *English* sailor. The British blue-jacket belongs to some of the most vivid memories of my childhood and he will appear again in one form or another in many of these chapters.

Cowes was a delightful little seaport town, with narrow streets, wooden-faced houses and what I seem to remember as ravishing shops.

It must be remembered that these reminiscences are of at least forty years ago. I have no idea if Cowes is still to-day what it was then, or if "modern improvements" have changed its face.

One of the chief attractions of going over to Cowes, was that you had to cross on a ferry. At high tide there was always a little water between the bank and the ferry-boat. The horses, especially beautiful Viceroy, called Skitty, made a lot of fuss about crossing this little strip of water, and I can still hear that peculiar splash when the horses were finally persuaded to cross it; and a sort of scrunch that the smooth shingle made under the wheels, then the sound of hollow boards under the horses' hoofs. The carriage gave a lunge that made us fall over one another with shrieks of delight. Then came the sound of the tautened chain when the ferry began to move, also the nervous stamping of horses' hoofs, and Skitty's restive impatience, a jingling of bits, and Robert's reassuring voice: "Woa-woa! old lady, steady there, old girl." And here let it be said that Skitty was not a girl at all, but very much a Viceroy, what the old head of the Royal Mews used to call "an entire 'orse."

Getting off the ferry was the repetition of getting on. A stamping of hoofs, a lunge, a scrunch of pebbles, a splash, and there one was on the other side.

Aunt Alix on the *Victoria and Albert* was as exquisite as in her ruby-red tea-gown, during the Eastwell shooting-party, but on these occasions she was generally a vision in white.

She always held a Pekingese dog in her arms and my three cousins, Louise, Victoria and Maude, were always hovering somewhere in the

background. They were all dressed in white and were impeccably neat with their so-called "sailor hats," which were considered the right thing to wear on board a yacht.

I do not remember how Mamma dressed us for these occasions, but it certainly was not in white.

Mamma had a curious aversion to dressing her daughters in white, and perhaps just because of this, a white dress was my dearest ambition. I dreamed of myself in a white dress, imagining that it would suit me better than any other colour. I was a somewhat vain little kid and dress meant a lot to me. But as our mother had queer notions of dress for herself so had she also for us. White for some reason was taboo. This so heightened the value of that hue of innocence that I have even envied the little Coburg schoolgirls, when on *Schulfest* days they marched over the Platz to the sound of a brass band, rigged out in stiff white muslin, with white cotton stockings and white cotton gloves. Indeed my *Sehnsucht* for a white dress must have been great if it caused me to envy my neighbour in such guise!

But to return to Cowes week.

Uncle Bertie on his beautiful yacht was a genial figure of rippling good-humour. As impeccably dressed for the occasion as beautiful Aunt Alix, he was royally condescending with his small nieces, would chuck us under the chin, pull our ears in a friendly manner, let off a few jokes at our expense and then laugh in his own special way which, alas, I cannot imitate on paper, but his laugh was a sort of crackle, a burst of good-humour which crumpled his face up into a hundred little lines.

We were never quite sure if we liked Uncle Bertie; he was too patronizing, he lorded it too much over everyone, and we were not yet old enough to come under the influence of his charm.

The three cousins were very kind, but they too treated us as the young things we were then, which made us feel cruelly the inferiority of our five to ten years less.

They used to call me "dear little Missy," and once Cousin Louise (later Duchess of Fife) gave me some sort of little china animal which I adored. It was a kindness I never forgot.

It was a thrilling moment when the cousins took us down to see their

cabins, which were full of every conceivable treasure, for in those days there was a craze for collecting every sort of *biblot*. The Wales Family, as we called them, to distinguish them from the Connaught and the Albany and Battenberg cousins, had a special talent for accumulating "treasures."

We would gasp before the magnitude of these collections; animals in bronze, china, stone, whole rows of wee vases, tiny photograph frames, lovely water-colours of gardens and sweet-faced ladies, of fields full of daffodils, of Windsor Castle in a mist, etc. Portraits of favourite horses, favourite dogs, favourite friends, and everywhere, smiling above everybody and everything else, Aunt Alix's beautiful face, even in photograph dominant, triumphant, like sunshine.

The Wales cousins had a special way of adding "dear little" or "poor little" to everybody they talked about. They always, if I can so express it, spoke in a minor key, *en sourdine*. It gave a special quality to all talks with them, and gave me a strange sensation, as though life would have been very wonderful and everything very beautiful, if it had not been so sad.

Why the Wales cousins should have been sad I cannot explain. Aunt Alix never gave you this sensation. To the very end there was about Aunt Alix something invincible, something exquisite and flowerlike. She gave you the same joy as a beautiful rose or a rare orchid or an absolutely faultless carnation. She was a garden flower that had been grown by a superlative gardener who knew every trick of his art.

I especially remember her hands, long, beautifully shaped hands that remained as young as her face, and she always wore a bracelet in the shape of a golden snake which was wound several times round her left arm, I think. The snake had a coloured stone in its head. So much did this bracelet seem a part of Aunt Alix that one had the feeling that it had grown on her arm.

The deafness she suffered from seemed but to add to Aunt Alix's charm, as did her slight limp.

Her way of coming into a room was incomparable, her smile of welcome lit everything up. All eyes turned towards her, and her sweetness was as great as her beauty. She was faithful and loving, and she cared for the young as well as for the old. Everyone felt happy in her presence. She radiated!

Beautiful, beautiful Queen Alexandra, may your memory be for ever blessed for the exquisite joy your face and your personality was to the world; it has become poorer since you have gone!

I suppose I shall soon have to leave Osborne to go on to other places, but let me mention one more thing, a wonderful prize cart-horse stallion we once saw at Grandmamma's farm.

He was phenomenal as to size, his neck was something tremendous, his hoofs like four rocks. His eyes were kindly and his forelock hung over his face giving him an adorable expression. He was a gorgeous creature, and I loved him with a passionate feeling of adoration. I remember going up to him and kissing his satiny shoulder which I could barely reach.

I can even now remember his name, Hitching Emperor, a name I considered quite unworthy of his beauty, especially as those who showed him off were apt to drop the first letter, which made of his name a poor one indeed. But Hitching Emperor, like the cream-coloured pony which was harnessed to Grandmamma's little carriage, haunted my dreams for many a day, and I invented no end of marvellous adventures in which this elephantine enchanter played a prominent part.

There was another great attraction at the Osborne Farm and that was the Spanish bull. He was a magnificent specimen, stone-grey with gigantic horns. He held his head like a monarch and looked at you with supreme disdain not unmingled with wrath. This regal creature could only be contemplated from a distance, which added to the thrill he gave us.

Here is another remembrance of Osborne: there was a long avenue of conifers leading up to the house, some of them, if I remember rightly, silver blue. I cannot remember what sort they were, I do not think I was ever told their name; probably in those days I never asked. But what has remained for ever unforgettable were the small bright red cones which grew on their top branches. They stood in rows like soldiers on parade. I never saw anything so entrancingly beautiful, and the contrast of the red with the silver blue was lovely. Never since have I seen them quite like this; I would go and look at them whenever I could; they were indescribably fascinating.

But how shall I ever be able to speak of all the wonderful things that

made childhood so extraordinary, made of it every day a new adventure? All things were discoveries, joys, delights, but sometimes also there was pain and bitter disappointment.

Saying good-bye to places or people was ever an agony to me. I am by nature faithful, I attach myself profoundly, my roots go deep and the pulling up of them is a cruel process. I like to move about but not to leave. I even mind leaving places I am not really fond of; somehow it hurts. I think that it is the pain of relinquishing, I do not like passing on, and yet we are for ever doing so. All good-byes have the anguish of death in them.

However great my hope and optimistic my outlook upon life may be, a sort of instinct in me knows and always has known that there is no going back, no living over anything twice. Time rolls on, carries you forward, what is past is past, it becomes but memory, dear, precious, often beautified by distance, but yet a memory; the shadow or the light of a thing that was and is no more. There is no holding fast, neither to days, seasons, years, nor to childhood, youth, nor riper years.

Time is a great enemy when it means sweeping forward when we would pause, but becomes the great friend and healer when it means the overcoming of sorrow and grief.

And I have known more than one uprooting, leaving, passing on. They were all cruel.

When I was about twelve years old my father was made Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean Fleet, with Malta as head-quarters. This brought a sudden change into our lives.

Eastwell was given up, beautiful Eastwell with its great grey house, its magnificent park, with its herds of deer and picturesque Highland cattle, its lake, its woods, its garden with the old cedar tree which was our fairy mansion. Eastwell, the house where I was born, with its many rooms, explored and unexplored, our nurseries, our schoolroom, and Mamma's cosy boudoir where she read to us of an evening and allowed us to finger the treasures on her tables; the breakfast-room, the drawing-room, and the dear library where the Christmas tree always stood and out of which a passage-like conservatory led into the garden. This passage ran down a flight of steps to a larger conservatory below, which was filled with tree-ferns; anyhow, it was the tree-ferns that impressed

themselves upon my mind, as did the bright red passion flowers, a kind I have never since seen anywhere, which climbed all over the roof of the glass passage leading down into it. The flowers were like crimson stars hanging from their creepers by thin stalks, as though purposely suspended just beyond your reach.

Having mentioned the Eastwell breakfast-room reminds me of two people who crossed our lives only to disappear.

One was Uncle Leopold, Duke of Albany; the other was Carlos, Crown Prince of Portugal, who later, as king, was assassinated with his son whilst driving through the streets of Lisbon during some festivity. The Queen and their second son were in the same carriage.

Brave Queen Amélie saved young Manuel by rising from her seat and striking the assassin in the face with her bouquet before he could make a third victim.

We used to come down to the family shooting-breakfast. Mamma, being an early riser, always presided at these meals. She was in fact always at the table first; her punctuality amounted to a mania, for she was always about ten minutes before time. Try as you might you could never be there before Mamma and were continually being scolded for being late.

So severe was she in her training about punctuality that all my life I retained an anxious and almost guilty feeling about time. The loss of five minutes seems almost a crime to me, and even to-day my conscience never leaves me in peace if I am a minute late.

Uncle Leopold was Queen Victoria's youngest son. He was born delicate and suffered from hæmophilia. He did not live much beyond thirty, I think. But he married and had two children, the second, a son, being born after his death.

Uncle Leopold was my mother's favourite amongst her brothers- and sisters-in-law. Being unable, because of his malady, to become a sportsman, he had become a scholar and was a lover of art. I think that it was his intelligence that endeared him to my mother.

I have but a very faint memory of him, have in fact only retained this passing vision of him in the Eastwell breakfast-room.

Although almost continually a sufferer, he was gay and amusing and fond of joking.

On that morning which I so vividly remember he came down to

breakfast holding a handkerchief before his mouth, saying that he had just lost a front tooth.

There was consternation and anxiety amongst the grown-ups seated round the table, because Uncle Leopold's special malady had to do with hæmorrhage, and it was all important that he should in no wise be wounded, fall or hurt himself. Knocks and bruises were also dangerous.

My mother, his hostess, was especially very much upset. She asked him to take his handkerchief from his mouth and let her see where he had lost a tooth.

Uncle Leopold removed his handkerchief, which had large red stains all over it, and there, sure enough, was a big black hole in his mouth, where one of his front teeth was gone. Everybody clustered round his seat, asking questions, suggesting remedies, when all of a sudden he burst out laughing. It was all a naughty farce. The hole in his mouth was black sticking-plaster, the stains on his handkerchief red paint!

Much relieved, everybody returned to their places, but Mamma, full of half-feigned, half-real indignation, gave him a bit of her mind about causing a loving family such emotion, and Mamma never gave a bit of her mind by halves.

There is nothing special to relate about Crown Prince Carlos of Portugal, except that for some reason we took a great fancy to him. He had the fairest hair we had ever seen, almost white and very curly. His face was a healthy red and his eyes extremely blue and already he was getting stout. He joked with us children, and although we were very shy when told that he was a cousin and that we could kiss him, we declared he had nice soft cheeks "like pin-cushions." Why pin-cushions was our expression for soft I do not know, but to concede that his cheeks were like pin-cushions was a sign of approval, and when he told us he had something interesting to show us we flocked delightedly round his chair.

Bending low, almost under the table, he drew from his pocket several cartridges. That was all, but we laughed and were delighted, simply because we liked him, and all his jokes, even the least intelligent, were considered by us excellent.

Curious how certain memories stick whilst others get quite wiped away as though they had never been, but the Eastwell breakfast-room

always reminds me of the faces of those two very different guests.

There is one tragic memory attached to Eastwell, and that was Nana Pitcathly's death.

I believe she died of cancer, but it is so long ago that I cannot quite remember, or perhaps I never knew. She was terribly ill but remained at her post to the very end.

Sister Beatrice was then quite a small baby and I remember Nana walking about with her in her arms during the night when the child was restless and cried, up and down, up and down, humming little songs and groaning in between, cruel, deep groans which she imagined we did not hear because she thought we were sleeping. But I shall never forget that tragic march up and down, up and down in a room where a single night-light burned, with the crying child in her faithful arms. Slave to her duty, she did not wish to give up one day before her strength gave way and she was absolutely obliged to do so.

That must have been in the spring, because sister Baby was born on Easter Sunday. In the autumn of that same year, on the 15th of November (I remember the date), Nana died in our house. She was the first dead person we ever saw. We were taken up to her death-chamber for a small service read at her bedside.

I remember her face, at peace, calm, but terribly severe and fearfully awesome, a stranger, and yet, in a way, still our dear old Nana.

I have no idea what sort of age she was then; to us she seemed old, but I think that she was hardly middle-aged.

We wept and wept so that we had to be taken from the room, and were inconsolable for a long time. The loss of Nana was truly a terrible loss. Mamma never took a real nurse for us after that, only nursery-maids; I was then nine years old, I think.

Sister Ducky always declared that if Baby Bee was such a naughty child, it was because she had never had a real nurse. This is very probably true. But perhaps Baby Bee was not as naughty as we remember her.

She was an out-of-the-way clever child, and Mamma, who adored this youngest daughter, never used with her the severity she had shown us elder children.

I cannot remember in what season we took leave of Eastwell. For

some reason I am a bit vague about the connexion between Eastwell and Malta or if anything came in between, and Mamma is no longer here to tell me the details I have forgotten; nor is there anyone else still alive who could tell me except my sisters, and they, being younger, are probably even vaguer than I about it. I must have been going on for twelve years old, I think.

But what I do remember was how Mademoiselle, our governess, persuaded us to give away most of our toys and treasures, instead of taking them all the way to Malta with us; this no doubt was wise advice, but it meant great sacrifice and much heart-break.

There were two treasures especially to which I clung beyond all else; one was the model of a cream-coloured horse which stood on a little board sprinkled with something that looked like steel-dust. This cream-coloured marvel, although, I believe, only made of papier mâché, was the *ne plus ultra* of perfection in our eyes; beautifully modelled, it was as wonderful as the famous Skitty himself, only *isabelle* instead of black. It had a pink nose and one delicate fore-leg was raised as though pawing the air; its mane and tail were long and sweeping. It was a faultless creature, might truly have been the Fairy Queen's horse. To part with this paragon really needed both courage and abnegation and there were great consultations as to who was worthy enough to become possessor of such a treasure. Finally for some reason the son of our carpenter Jones was chosen. I cannot remember any other reason except that we liked Jones the father. He was a pale, anæmic man with a dark beard, hollow cheeks and sad eyes, but he was one of the forces that counted in the house. Jones, like all carpenters, was the children's friend. I do not remember anything at all about Jones junior.

My second treasure was of a different kind; a tiny bonbonnière of some metal simulating gold, a round perforated little box set with false turquoises. I suppose it was a real little horror, but I valued it as though it had been from the *trésor* of St. Mark's in Venice.

I had pulled it one day out of a bran-tub at a big London children's party given by some lady or other who lived near Battersea Park.

I remember that party in connexion with a sentence pronounced by the hostess. When we left she said: "Be sure if you ever drive past this way to look in and see us, promise you will!"

Of course we very shyly promised we would, and ever afterwards

when we passed her house (I cannot remember her name, probably I never knew it), I always felt guilty, because we did not stop and keep our promise, imagining that the lady would be dreadfully offended. I considered the promise we had made a binding one: I was also sure that the lady had seriously meant her invitation. I even tried to avoid that street so as not to pass her threshold in case she should see our infidelity.

I cannot begin writing about my Malta recollections without first speaking of Clarence House in London, which was the Duke of Edinburgh's town residence, and which was not given up at the same time as Eastwell Park, but only much later, when my father died.

It is also necessary to mention one thing which explains the curious duality of our lives which, after Malta, were spent between England and Germany.

The Prince Consort, Queen Victoria's husband, was the younger brother of Duke Ernest of Saxe-Coburg.

Of Duke Ernest I shall speak more later on, for he was an interesting personality and belongs already so completely to history that I shall feel justified in telling many a queer little tale about him; but here it need only be mentioned that he had no children. It was therefore decided between the English and the German branches of the family that the second son of Queen Victoria and of the Prince Consort should become heir to the Duke of Coburg.

This was of course settled, so to say, over the head of my father by his parents; he was not consulted as to whether this arrangement was pleasant to him, it was simply decreed by both families that this should be. Therefore it was also decided that our only brother Alfred should be educated in Germany as he would later become a reigning prince in that country. This explains why we were so often separated from Alfred, who did not follow us about in all our peregrinations between London, Malta, Osborne, Russia and Coburg, which were, as can well be imagined, detrimental to steady and systematic education.

Alfred's head-quarters were Coburg, where my father had built a house, which was called Edinburgh Palace, and where my brother quietly pursued his studies under the care of a German tutor, of whom more will be said anon.

This arrangement separated us a great deal from our brother, who

was certainly given the opportunity of learning more systematically than his sisters, but who missed all that joy of travelling which fell to our share. It may here be added that our education was somewhat haphazard because of these many *déplacements*, as it always meant beginning all over again with other teachers and other methods, even in other languages and never for long at a time. My education was, in fact, more than sketchy, and I have a feeling that none of the masters or mistresses I had was very efficient and none of them fired my love of study. Anyhow, when I married at seventeen the weight of knowledge given me on my way was not heavy!

But travelling taught us much that no lessons on a school-bench could ever have taught.

CHAPTER III

CLARENCE HOUSE, SCOTLAND AND RUSSIA

As children we thoroughly disliked London and each time it was a grief when the season came for leaving Eastwell and the joys of the country for Clarence House, for smuts and smoke and gloomy walks in the Green Park, which we abhorred.

Clarence House forms one block with St. James's Palace and shares with it a broad strip of garden overlooking the Mall.

One of the miseries of London was the mess one always got into because of the smuts. Any fall on London soil meant great black stains on clothes, knees or stockings. There was also about it a special greasiness I cannot forget.

We dearly loved, for instance, being taken to play about in Buckingham Palace gardens, instead of walking in the dreaded Green Park, but the mess we made of ourselves was so great that smocks were always taken with us and put on before our games began, and taken off when we recrossed the road on the way home.

Buckingham Palace gardens were huge and had delightful mysterious corners in them, besides quite a large lake.

One of our favourite haunts was the part where a big aviary stood on a sort of little hill overgrown with incredibly smutty bushes, which hid it from sight. This hill was the dirtiest, blackest part of the whole garden, the many birds living there adding greatly to its messiness.

But there was a charm that never palled about this grimy spot. We called the aviary hill the Alps, and blissfully imagined that we were mountaineering, which consisted of climbing its black greasy sides or sliding down them till we became filthy beyond description. Besides this it was the covert of birds of every kind, peacocks, silver and gold pheasants and every sort of duck and goose which used to swim about in the lake. Wonderful feathers were found upon our "Alps," enchanting treasures of indescribable colours, but none outshining the peacock's

feathers, which always remained the most fairy-like and astounding, with their marvellous eye and divine colouring.

I have only a shadowy recollection of the games we played, but they were wonderful and exciting and had a whole story woven into them and each season they were taken up anew. We were imaginative children and each had a part which we played as conscientiously as possible. I must confess that I never accepted a minor part, I was always one of the principal if not *the* principal figure, and certainly if there was a queen in the plot I always played that rôle.

We loved dressing up and my idea of a queen was having a very long train dragging behind me over the floor. But here on the "Alps" other parts were played, trains being out of place. We were robbers and explorers, pirates and path-finders and what not else! But I remember my indignation which had specially to do with "trains" when I was told that the peacock, who strutted about so victoriously through our smutty domain, was the male, not the female. According to my imagination the peacock was the queen of the bird world and the beautiful tail he carried behind him was Her Majesty's court train; what use could a man, even a bird-king, have for such a magnificent train?

When, later, Rostand wrote his celebrated "*Chantecler*," I was much amused to see that, imbued with the same feeling about the logic of dress, he made his *fésane* wear her lord and master's plumes.

Clarence House garden was much smaller and far less interesting than Buckingham Palace garden. It was tidy and had no mysterious corners except quite at the far end where a certain old Prince of Leiningen and his daughter Feo had a studio for sculpture. This part of the garden belonged to St. James's Palace and not to Clarence House, but there was no division between the two except a few scraggy trees masking the wooden *barraque* of the studio.

This was a world for discoveries where you could pick up marvellous chips of marble that looked like hoar-frost covered snow, and where you could flatten and blacken your nose against large panes of glass, peeping in upon the mysterious work going on behind the windows.

Here we discovered extraordinary figures, some in clay, some in red terra-cotta, some in marble with little black spots all over them, and some swathed in dirty sheets or towels which made of them haunting apparitions. There was also a special smell of wet earth and plaster,

not pleasant but irresistible, because we felt that it *meant* something, exactly *what* we did not know, but there was something of "creation" about it, something to do with the eternal "potter potting with his thumb."

Although we only realized this vaguely, subconsciously we felt that this "something" had to do with the clay which from all ages has been used for "creation," for modelling shapes which had secret life in them. Perhaps Pygmalion might have explained, but he, alas, was not of our times, and the old Prince of Leiningen, master of these premises, although some sort of uncle several times removed, was not a welcoming personality and did not encourage us to poke about in his field.

Clarence House was not without charm, though it was hopelessly smutty and everything you touched made your fingers black. It had an odour all its own, a mixture of fog, oakwood, cigarette smoke and a certain Russian scent Mamma used for burning in the rooms. There was also a particular perfume peculiar to Mamma's own apartment, a most satisfactory fragrance of Russian leather and cedar wood which had something to do with the furniture she had brought with her all the way from St. Petersburg.

The greatest attraction was a shadowy corner in Mamma's bedroom where she had hung all her holy images.

With the utmost reverence, not unmixed with curiosity, whenever we dared we would creep towards this corner of mystery and contemplate the many wonderful icons.

Three of the most venerated were crowned by diamond rays that were fixed above the heads of the saints like small suns. Each sun had a wonderful gem at its centre, a large sapphire, ruby or emerald. The glamour of these holy pictures cannot be described; all Russia's gorgeousness seemed to shine from these incredibly brilliant diamond rays, fixed above the saints' heads. The corner the shrine stood in, being dark, made it all the more thrilling.

And here a little lamp always burned beside the pictures of my mother's parents on their death-beds, burned like a steady eye watching over mysteries small children might feel but not fathom.

Besides the icons there were also two pictures in Mamma's bedroom that enthralled us; one was of a lovely woman, also evidently a saint,

carrying a little catacomb lamp in her hand, the light of which was thrown up on her face from below making it look unearthly and transparent. The other, also hanging in a very shadowy nook, represented a corner of the San Giovanni degli Eremiti Cloister of Palermo. It was just a few columns with a pumpkin plant growing over one of them and a big pumpkin resting on part of the balustrade. The sunlight on the picture was wonderfully done, bringing out the difference between light and shade in an astonishing way. This picture had a special fascination for all of us children; there was something deeply mysterious and satisfactory about it. I think that it is my sister Ducky who to-day possesses this picture.

I have never forgotten certain pictures seen in childhood, they have remained for ever impressed upon my mind.

One I would like to speak about to-day as I can still see it as vividly as I did then when I was quite a small girl.

If I remember rightly it was in an annual picture exhibition at Berlin. Why we were at Berlin, a town we hardly ever went to, I cannot explain, and all the details have remained perfectly hazy. I cannot even recollect with whom I was, or who took me there, and I only remember two pictures.

One picture was of a small child in poor clothing, stroking with infinite compassion a dead deer hung up against a wall. On the child's face was an expression of loving pity and somehow I felt, when looking at that picture, exactly what the child was feeling.

But the other, the unforgettable picture, was a large-sized Italian water-colour with the title "Mia Povera Maria"—you see I even remember the title.

It represented a sort of bare chapel all in rough stone, perhaps the fore-part of a church, in which a flower-covered bier had been stood. A dead girl lay upon the bier. Her face was waxen, her hair black, and one could just see her folded hands amongst the flowers.

A young man in peasant dress lay, face hidden against the coffin, in an attitude of overwhelming distress. In the background crouched an old, witch-like woman warming her hands over a brazier, watching the man's grief with eyes too tired to express sorrow.

The picture took hold of me utterly. I could not be moved from be-

fore it. There was a world of grief in it which stirred me to my very depths; besides, it was certainly the painting of a great artist. It is a picture that has haunted me ever since. Many years later I found somewhere a photograph of this picture, but never, alas! did I see the original again.

There was never anything morbid in my nature, but all pictures of grief or of dead people moved me strangely, especially the pictures of *silent* grief, and I would always buy these pictures if I could.

I remember taking tickets for a lottery in that exhibition with the ardent hope of winning "Mia Povera Maria" although it was probably not in the lottery at all. But for years I dreamed of what would have been the joy of possessing that wonderful water-colour.

But now back again to Clarence House.

Over the principal staircase hung the large head of an elephant my father had shot, in India I think; his trunk almost touched one as one passed, and in the hall stood a bear on his hind legs, a huge, savage-looking beast holding a small tray between his front paws on which visitors left their cards for the gentlemen-in-waiting. All the corridors were full of trophies of different shoots in distant countries, and there was also a figure in Japanese armour, with a grinning mask. We did not like this ugly fellow with the empty eye-sockets. But what we dearly loved were the two official drawing-rooms which were not often used. One was called the Chinese drawing-room and was full of curios Papa had brought from China, beautiful old weapons and bronzes, ivories and embroideries, and also, as far as I can remember, a few precious jades.

Papa was a great collector of antiques and also quite a connoisseur. When he died, his collections unfortunately did not come to us, but for some reason were taken over by Uncle Bertie, then still Prince of Wales.

The second big salon was full of treasures Mamma had brought from Russia, all sorts of objects carved from the many semi-precious stones from the Urals: dishes and vases, bowls and cups, Easter eggs and whole writing- and toilet-table sets, in particular a valuable collection in the much-prized Orletz, an extremely hard stone, dark pink with streaks of grey.

We loved fingering these treasures, but it must be added that we were generally severely enjoined not to touch. I cannot, however, affirm that we always respected these orders, the temptation was too great.

Memories of London are of several periods. The Buckingham Palace garden times were when we were very small, and these glorious gambols were severely interrupted by days when stiff walks in the Green Park (which was quite near Clarence House) were *de rigueur*.

We loathed these walks with an absent-minded governess who was as bored as we were. Besides, what irony to call it the Green Park when we were severely kept off the grass which was railed off by a black iron paling a foot high. There was no virtue in the Green Park except the virtue of walking in it. No interesting people ever walked on its hard little paths, nothing ever happened, nothing was ever seen in that deadly dull place, only once, by a piece of unexpected good luck, I picked up a wee little bronze idol, about an inch high. That was a tremendous find, and is the only agreeable memory I have of the dreary Green Park. This absurd little idol is still in my possession. I wonder who could have dropped it there?

Outside, beyond the dreaded confines of this dreary park, almost opposite the entry to Buckingham Palace stood the balloon man. He was an everlasting hope. On days when Mademoiselle was in a good humour she would discover pennies in her pocket and then we would march triumphantly home with airballs of different hues, a small procession of happy little people crowned with globes of colour. But these were rare days, generally Mademoiselle's pockets were as empty of pennies as her heart was of mercy for our boredom.

What extraordinary joy these balloons gave. I loved the pink ones best. There was a delightfully nasty smell about airballs, irresistibly nasty, so that we were for ever rubbing our noses against them. And how curiously warm they were to the touch! And when you drew your fingers across their taut surface they gave out a peculiar sound, half squeak, half groan.

Of course we always dreamed that our balloons would be long-lived, but they were inevitably as ephemeral as butterflies. There were three mishaps peculiar to balloons; they would burst or die away gradually, becoming thin, limp and wrinkly, or they would escape out of your

grasp and fly up to the ceiling where they would float, mocking you from their height, the symbol of happiness just beyond reach.

But blessed be the memory of these balloons! They only cost a penny, but there was a whole fortune of joy within their frail globes. Pink, blue, green, orange, red, violet, they were bubbles of enchantment, representing the *summum* of our desires, beckoning to us from just beyond the gates of the Green Park, the unloved.

Belonging to this period was also a curious fear we suffered from, for children have strange fears.

The Clarence House stairs were very steep, rather like the backstairs at Eastwell. Papa and Mamma gave occasional dinners; many people came to these rather rare feasts which were an occasion of excitement to the nursery authorities.

We used to be packed off to bed, and then Nana would steal away to the head of the stairs and peer down upon the procession of guests going in or coming out of the dining-room, or climbing the stairs towards the drawing-room after the meal was over.

The beauty of the ladies' dresses and the magnificence of their jewels were a special source of interest, and were commented upon for days afterwards.

But we children, left in our white cots to go to sleep like good little girls, suffered tortures from some sort of cruel hallucination that Nana was going to fall over the banisters whilst looking down upon the guests.

This idea tortured us. It became indeed a veritable nightmare, till occasionally we would, like Wee Willie Winkie, steal out in our nightgowns to assure ourselves that the terrible disaster had not taken place.

When we caught a glimpse of her alive and well, looking down, deeply interested in what she saw beneath, we would scuttle back to our beds again like frightened white mice.

Nana was kind but severe. Her face was of the heroic type, with clear-cut rather hard features of a somewhat imperial cast. Like all self-respecting nurses of the old type, she ruled with a rod of iron and kept us in almost military subjection.

Nana had invented an instrument of torture called "the strap," which was nothing but a strip of leather the end of which was cut into many fingers. This strap was used for whipping, or was *supposed* to be used

that way, but I cannot remember its ever having been really used, but it always hung on one or other of our beds as a warning to the unruly.

There were two "straps," a brown and a black one, and for some reason we decreed that the black strap was much the worse of the two; it was the chief bogey.

Nana was also of the days when medicines were not made pleasant to take. They had to be accepted in all their unalloyed nastiness and three of these have remained nightmare memories. There was, first and foremost, castor oil, which used to be taken out of a warmed silver tablespoon, for none of Mamma's castor-oil pills ever found their way to the nursery. Then there was Gregory powder, which was a gritty, orange-coloured rhubarb mixture and used to be stirred with horrible deliberation in a small wine-glass; it was a loathsome concoction and the imbibing thereof was a tragedy that never went off without scenes of revolt.

The third of those remedies was called "Grey powder," which was bad enough but all the same the least of the three evils and would be given in a spoon sweetened by red currant jelly, which has made that particular jelly impossible to me for all time.

Ah, but I was forgetting another gruesome mixture which was called Syrup of Squills, which was inflicted upon you when for some reason it was considered necessary that you should be sick. Syrup of Squills never failed to produce this probably salutary but certainly unpleasant effect.

Nana, presiding over the medicine chest, had the grimness of the Fates deciding over human destinies.

How clearly I still see her, and also the black and brown "straps" hanging as sinister warnings against any insubordination at the foot of our beds.

Outside our night nursery, in the corridor, stood an old grandfather clock which played a chime each time it struck; that, with Big Ben booming out into the night, are two sounds peculiar to nursery days, to its joys and fears, its hopes, tears and revolts.

And dear old Nana Pitcathly was the grim goddess of the nursery, as Mademoiselle was tyrant of the schoolroom, whom we loved less than Nana, though, looking back, I believe that Nana was much the severer of the two.

My memories of the Clarence House schoolroom are of several sorts. It was a long-shaped rather narrow room with a flat open fireplace at one end, and faced Stafford House, then inhabited by the Duke of Sutherland.

I do not remember much about our lessons, but I remember having experienced a real London fog in this particular room, a fog so thick that one could not even see the fire burning at the farther end of the not very large room.

Mademoiselle wore spectacles, she turned her feet out when she walked, she was highly religious and was *too* good friends with the lady-in-waiting, a certain Lady Emma Osborne; a super-refined, unmarried gentlewoman, prudish, protesting, and, I am afraid, in league with Mademoiselle to disapprove of the Duchess's foreign ways and ideas.

I remember two things about Lady Emma, her most exquisite hands, very pale and white, with tapering fingers, and a special dress she wore of violet velvet trimmed with swansdown of the same colour; we much admired this dress. Her greatest virtue was that she smelt deliciously of some excellent scent that was particularly agreeable to my fastidious nose; it had something to do with verbenas, I think.

But Lady Emma, being a spinster, disapproved of children in general and of us in particular and was for ever coming out into the corridor to scold us for making such a noise. Unfortunately her room was on the same landing as the nurseries and schoolroom and she spoiled many of our games, especially as she and Mademoiselle were such strong allies.

One sad little schoolroom incident must be related as it has to do with education and has also a moral in it.

We each of us kept a so-called scrap-book in which we stuck our Christmas and Valentine cards (for in those days one still sent and received Valentine cards, nice shiny ones with pansies or forget-me-nots on them and with edges of paper perforated to look like lace), and a pot of paste was kept with which to stick in these cards.

There was something special about this paste. First of all it looked so appetizing that you felt inclined to eat it, but it was its delicious perfume that endeared it to me. There was an exquisite odour of bitter almonds about it that for some reason was infinitely satisfying to my

nose. The fat pot with this treasured paste stood in a small cupboard.

There was a certain hour in the evening when we had to prepare our lessons for next day. Occasionally we were put into separate rooms so that we should not be tempted to talk instead of working.

One evening I was alone in the schoolroom puzzling over some dull problem, and ever and again my thoughts wandered towards the cupboard with the pot of paste. Ever greater became the attraction, it was like a magnet drawing me towards the cupboard. If only I could take one sniff at it, I was sure my brain would clear; besides it would be liberation from an obsession which left me no peace.

Children have curiously delicate consciences. After all, it was not such an awful misdeed to get up and take a sniff at a pot of glue, but somehow I felt that it belonged to those things that were "not done." But alas! after having manfully resisted for some time, I rose from my seat; the magnet was drawing me with a force I could no longer deny, so I crept like a thief towards the fatal cupboard, opened the door with trembling fingers and plunging the fat brush into the still fatter pot, I filled it with thick white paste, and, shutting my eyes so as to lose none of the ecstasy, I took a long, soul-satisfying breath of the perfume I so adored.

Steps in the corridor. . . . Mademoiselle! As one committing a crime or theft I hastily laid down the fatal brush and dashed back to my seat, putting on, as the door opened, as innocent a face as possible.

But I suppose I was a bad actress, sincerity, not ruse, was my speciality. Mademoiselle felt, guessed, smelt that something was wrong. She looked at me, she stared at me; I felt that I was blushing but I tried to go on with my work as unconcernedly as possible, my nose close to my book, as though nothing had happened. But in vain.

"Princesse, qu'avez vous fait?"

"Rien, Mademoiselle."

But Mademoiselle was not so easily put off. Her bespectacled eyes searched the room, up and down, the floor, the ceiling, the furniture, the walls . . . and suddenly with a pounce she was beside the cupboard, its door was ajar.

She pulled it open, and there, on the clean white paper of the shelf, lay the revealing brush, fat, heavy, sticky with paste. Not in its pot as

it should have been, but, of all dreadful things, on the nice clean white paper. Ugh, what a mess!

Drama followed. I did not try to deny my misdeed. I *had* left my seat. I *had* sniffed at the precious paste, it *was* I who had laid the brush down in a hurry, yes, on the paper instead of in the pot. If only I had had the presence of mind to put it back into the pot there would have been no proof against me, but the world is full of ifs.

The long and the short of it was that the crime, for some reason that even to-day I cannot fathom, was considered great, and as punishment I had to stand before Mademoiselle with outstretched palm and was given three cuts with an ebony, brass-edged ruler, which was both painful and humiliating. It was in fact the only time in all my life that a rod was ever used in my education.

According to my ideas, the "punishment did not fit the crime" and the remembrance of this chastisement still rankles.

Probably Mademoiselle was in a bad temper that day. Moral: governesses must avoid being bad-tempered, but little girls must not care overmuch for sweet scents, there is the seed of perdition in this weakness, nor must they at the wrong moment lose their heads and deposit sticky paste brushes upon clean white paper, instead of back into the pot.

Anyhow it is a sad story and I hate the very memory of that black ruler with the four shiny edges.

But there are also pleasanter remembrances of the Clarence House schoolroom. It was there that I had my first taste of toffee, and it was there that "Les Malheurs de Sophie" and many another enchanting book was read to us.

It was also from this room that we used to hear the Life Guards or the "Blues" pass on their way to change guard.

They passed with a jingle of metal which could be heard even when the window was shut. But what a torture it was to remain glued to your chair instead of jumping up to look down upon their extraordinary perfection!

From afar one heard the tramp of horses' hoofs approaching. They were coming. Nearer, nearer, now one could hear the champing of bits, the sound of metal against metal, the clinking of chains, and by their very sound one visualized how bright and shiny they were. Nearer,

nearer! Now they were just under our windows, the narrow street reverberated with their tread. Then fainter and fainter would the glorious tramp become, they were moving away . . . away . . . they had come, passed and gone.

To the later London period belonged the rides in Hyde Park, a wonderful advancement.

At Eastwell we had possessed one pony for all three of us, a fat, irresistible animal called Tommy. The three of us shared Tommy, taking him in turns.

Our rides on Tommy had been most unscientific, crudely instructed by a groom or coachman, but they had from the first taught us the "feel" of a horse, taught us to be fearless and above all given us the idea that we *could* ride, and this is half the battle.

In London an absurd old riding-master, called Mr. Lumley, had been excavated from somewhere and he it was who polished up our knowledge, first round and round Clarence House garden and finally, to our delight, we were allowed out into the field of our dearest ambitions, Rotten Row. It was old Lumley who provided the horses for these rides.

I cannot exactly remember what age we were then, anyhow we were small mites and our joy and excitement was huge.

Never shall I forget the sensation of gleeful enchantment it was starting off on these rides, accompanied by the care-worn Mr. Lumley in top-hat, with something of the air of an anxious hen about him. A fearfully correct old hen, though, correct with the correctness that can be attained solely by riding- or dancing-masters.

First came the opening of Clarence House gateway, presided over by the dear old porter, Mallet, I think, was his name, and past our private policeman who was a great friend of ours (or was the policeman's name Mallet?). This was followed by the sound of our horses' hoofs on the wooden pavement of the street, luckily for us beginners a very quiet by-way; there was the turn into the riders' road leading down to the Mall, past the Green Park, and all along its hated paling opposite Buckingham Palace garden wall, through the archway at the end. Then came the most ticklish part of the whole business, the part which made old Lumley the most anxious, the safe steering across Hyde Park Corn-

er into the Park itself, and finally the reaching of the precious Row with all its expanse of sand, opening out before you a real paradise of hope, an endless promise of gallops not unmixed with just a thrill of apprehension to make them more exciting.

Ducky and I had decided, so that there should never be any discussions or quarrels, that once and for all she, being the taller, would ride the bigger horse, I the smaller, never matter what their looks might be. In this way she sometimes had the better horse and sometimes I. As far as I can remember, Sandra, as we called our third sister Alexandra, used in those early days to ride Tommy, the safe, reliable, irresistible Tommy who also followed us later to Malta.

Those rides in Hyde Park were bliss. Old Lumley was sometimes cross and always absent-minded, but he could not damp our spirits. His legs were thin, his face looked mummified and his meagre grey hair was brushed forwards under his top-hat to hide his sunken temples. Old Lumley was in fact rather a pathetic figure.

I think he must have given lessons right into his ripest old age, for many years later, when quite emancipated from riding-lessons, I met him again in the Row and greeted him with a shout of recognition. He looked at me with a blank stare as though we had never shared the joys and the cares of the Row together. I suppose I was more changed than he was. In his days I was a wee girly, now I do not know exactly what I was—*Nicht Fisch und nicht Fleisch*, as the Germans would have said. But I was sadly mortified to be cut dead by my old riding-master. His face was more care-worn than ever, he had perhaps become just a little drier and thinner but otherwise *he* had not changed at all.

Into this period enters also a certain amount of theatre-going. This joy fell but seldom to our share but when it did it was a tremendously exciting event.

The very smell of a London theatre and of the beautiful bouquets we would find in our box when we arrived, what joy! There was a kind of dark velvety red rose very wide open, with rounded petals, specially characteristic of these bouquets. In Paris these roses are now sometimes given to me, but they immediately carry me back to the London theatres and to that glorious sensation of excited expectation before the curtain went up.

One of the plays I best remember is *Macbeth*, with Irving and Ellen Terry, a wonderful representation; but the apparition of Banquo's ghost was so appallingly well done that for nights afterwards we could not sleep without a light in our room.

Ellen Terry, with her long red plaits, was a lovely incarnation of Macbeth's fierce queen, especially in the scene when, all in white, she came down the stairs walking in her sleep and trying to wash the blood off her hands.

But my mother could not stand Henry Irving and my father disliked him still more and tried to make us see his affectations, especially his stage limp and his snarl in the scenes when he simulated anger or rage. In spite of these criticisms, we children had a sneaking liking for Irving, even at his worst.

I shall never forget what living interest the gallery in England took in any drama; the villain was always hissed or whistled at, whilst the hero was applauded not for his acting but for his actions.

We also saw Irving in a very sentimental piece about Charles I; all to the advantage of Charles I, of course, and we, naturally being stout Royalists, loathed Cromwell with all our souls.

But our hero of heroes on the stage was "Lord Harry," played by Wilson Barrett, who was, according to our ideas, the very incarnation of all that was most perfect, man and hero blending into one. Wilson Barrett *was* Lord Harry.

This piece was also of the sentimental kind. Lord Harry was a brave, virtuous, beautiful, self-sacrificing Cavalier, splendid enough to satisfy our dearest dreams of perfection. He ravished us so completely that for years we cherished the memory of this play, and whenever asked what we would like to see, it was always *Lord Harry*, till finally Mamma, although she too was an admirer of Wilson Barrett, sent us to see *Charley's Aunt* instead.

This gross farce made us laugh till our sides ached, but all the time we regretted *Lord Harry*. No allurements could drag us away from our ideal, and this no doubt was provoking to our elders who knew that there were plenty of other fascinating plays to be seen besides *Lord Harry*.

We infinitely preferred drama to comedy and although we laughed with all our hearts when taken to the latter, we considered it a waste

of those rare and precious theatre treats, if we were taken to a funny play instead of to something heroic, in costume.

Shakespeare was appreciated and accepted from the first, as was in later years Schiller at the Coburg Theatre, both, I fear, more for the story and fine display than for any beauty of language or verse.

Later the opera cut out even the drama.

Before I leave London I want to mention some of the servants, for servants always play a big part in children's lives.

My mother had two, what in royal households are called "pages," one of whom was old Hutchins, an old-fashioned servant with clean-shaven chin and long whiskers. A pompous old fellow was Hutchins, but entirely our slave. The other was called William Smith. He was of the "Haw-haw" kind, clean-shaven, smart, over-good-looking in a massive, florid way, probably a lady-killer in the steward's room, and I should say inclined to be vulgar in private life, which we children instinctively felt, especially after having found a drawing made by William of a lady who showed more leg than was the fashion in those more ceremonial and polite days. This drawing gave us a shock and William was, I remember, much upset at its having fallen into the royal children's hands.

The butler, or steward as he was called in our house, was a gentle, soft-voiced man with the name of Gardener, but he has remained very shadowy in my mind; I only see him hovering in the background, pale and refined, holding the string of his pince-nez between his fingers, a pince-nez he only put on when reading small print.

William the hearty and Hutchins the bewhiskered were much the greatest realities in our lives.

When we were a little older, it was *we* who did the looking down over the banisters when there were big dinner-parties and Nana who held on to our dresses from the back for fear *we* should come to grief.

Hutchins looms large in my recollections of these occasions. When the guests had gone into the dining-room we would creep down into the two favourite and seldom-used drawing-rooms, where all the Chinese and Russian treasures were accumulated, and there, with impatience, we would await old Hutchins who stole up between the courses to bring us exquisite tit-bits from the feast downstairs. Mamma had instituted

on these occasions the Russian "Zakuska," which was a great success. Delicious crumbs from the rich man's table found their way through Hutchins to our greedy little mouths. Once, however, he made the mistake of bringing us a little piece of toast with caviare. This was termed "disgusting stuff," and I regret to say was disposed of in a manner we afterwards never dared confess. We threw it down from the top of the back-stairs upon a cupboard which stood on the lowest landing! I do not know how long that piece of toast and caviare lay mouldering undiscovered on that cupboard top. We could not see it from so far up, especially as the cupboard had a sunken top.

Wonderful games were played in those two drawing-rooms before the guests came up. Here was a moment when I could be a queen to my heart's content. I would find some bright-coloured curtain or table-cover, which, fastened round my waist, would trail gorgeously behind me over the ground, and for some reason I liked to call myself the Queen of Spain: that name had about it something both historical and adventurous, which sounded well in my ears—it was grand and dignified, and had a smack of *les châteaux en Espagne*.

Ducky usually played the part of my husband, my son or my horse, or all three in turn, according to the necessities of the game.

Ducky always played the heroic, brave, self-sacrificing parts, and was almost always a male. There was something heroic about Ducky, even at that early age; something a little sombre. She was the one who espoused causes, she was the "fore-fighter," the one who discussed and resented, who allowed no nonsense, and had no patience with frauds. She immediately spotted any insincerity and let nothing pass. Tall for her age, she was strong and rebellious, but like the strong she was also a defender of the weak and oppressed, and sometimes she even espoused lost causes with a bravery that we less heroic ones admired without imitating.

I on the contrary was always inclined to let well alone.

As for sister Sandra, she was in those days a fat, harmless child, sweet-tempered and fair-haired, who followed her elders' footsteps, eager *mitzumachen*, but humble before reproof.

We two elders treated her with a certain imperious off-handedness which had no unkindness in it, but which over-ruled her timid desires, offering her the parts she was to play in such wise that she could not

but accept them. Later she chose her own parts, but not then. She was, however, also permitted to be a queen, and perhaps in self-defence, on those special evenings, married old Hutchins, which gave her a feeling of security and enabled her to hold her own against the Queen of Spain with her husband, her son and her horse!

It was a glorious game in which each played her part seriously, actually becoming the personage she was impersonating, but Sandra had often to relinquish the support of her "husband," who had to hurry down to serve the next course.

Well before the guests (ladies first) came up to the official drawing-rooms, we were hurried off to bed.

Music had no great part in our education. Mamma confessed to me later that her one desire had been to have a *Wunderkind*. Her ambition was that one or the other of us should have some startling talent, music, painting, singing, dancing, mathematics, anything, so long as it were tremendous. When none of us showed any disposition to become anything out of the ordinary she gave us up as lost causes and disappointments; it was no good, therefore, educating such little nonentities in any special way, so our ear was never formed and for a long time we had execrable taste in music.

But all the same I can remember the shiver of real joy that ran through me when Mamma sometimes sat down at the piano and played.

She had white, plump, short-fingered hands; her touch was exquisitely soft and velvety. Her playing was like running water. I remember especially a Romance of Rubinstein and a posthumous Prelude of Chopin which used to melt my heart within me. So I must all the same have "felt" music even at that early age.

Ducky, and later baby Bee, were the musical ones of the family. I had talent only for drawing and painting, a talent which my other sisters shared, but there was a time when I was first in this art.

It was Mamma who initiated us into the joys of Grimm and Andersen, especially Andersen, whose fairy-tales are *the* fairy-tales of the world.

Mamma read beautifully, and could read by the hour, but she never allowed us to sit with idle hands, we had always to be working at something or other, crochet, knitting or drawing.

We loved above all the story of "The Little Mermaid," we wept rivers of tears over that eternally pathetic tale, and no matter how often it was read (for children always want to hear stories over and over again), each time it moved us in the same way.

Andersen has remained my ideal for all time, and to-day, when I myself try my hand at fairy-stories, I always try to write them *à la manière d' Andersen*, who better than anyone else knew his art and can wring both smiles and tears from the stoniest heart.

Mamma always spoke English with us. She would never teach us Russian, declaring that she did not wish to hear her beloved mother-tongue mutilated by her own children. She adored us, gave up her life to us, but for all that she had little faith in us; that was the strange, strange thing.

We were not *Wunderkinder*, so, even in later years, when each developed some humble talent of her own, although she encouraged us, it was always patronizingly and with a touch of contempt. She never took us seriously, we were of a younger generation, nor had we been educated as perfectly as she had been; and above all we were Protestants, and therefore some parts of our souls were shut off from hers.

Beloved, big-hearted, generous Mamma, built on grand lines, but always a seeker, restless in her own soul: one who, in looking for complete perfection, often almost unjustly overlooked what might have been true sources of joy, had she not always been hankering after an ideal implanted in her by those who brought her up.

Like all human beings, she was full of *Sehnsucht*, but she need not have been so lonely had she only trusted her children a little more.

One summer was spent in Scotland instead of at Osborne. This was the only time I ever went to Scotland and my memory of it is full of enchantment.

Grandmamma Queen, the all-powerful, had lent us a wee house called Abergeldie Maines, where we spent the first part of the summer with our governess. Later, towards autumn, Mamma came and we moved to a rather bigger house or cottage called Birkhall. I have but a vague vision left of this house, but it cannot have been a very big one as we all three, Ducky, Sandra and I, slept in one huge bed. This was exciting if not particularly comfortable. Two slept with their heads towards the

top of the bed, the other with her head against the foot, her feet separating the other two sleepers. Why this arrangement had been found necessary I cannot explain, as I have no vision of the inside of the house except of that one bedroom.

But all the "outside" impressions have remained clear and luminous. We simply adored Scotland, with its low, undulating, heather-covered hills, its moors and burns, its mists and lochs. There was something infinitely poetical and just a little mysterious about it which touched some special chord in me. Much, much later, having discovered the books of Fiona Macleod, I loved them with the same intensity as I loved Scotland the only time I was ever there. There was something enveloped and hazy about it, something legendary, which powerfully moved the soul within me, something kindred to my spirit, if I may so express myself.

Curiously enough, extremes draw me. I *feel* the almost mystical charm of Scotland and at the same time I simply adore the South with its profuse luxuriant "gloriousness," and its occasional aridity. My heart is, so to say, torn between the two; different currents in my nature are attracted. Malta and Scotland are most fundamentally different lands, and yet both are almost painfully kindred to my soul. I *feel* them both, they almost torture me with the love they inspire in me.

No striking event marks that summer in Scotland, everything in my memory is hazy with a haziness akin to the Highland mists. Half-tones; browns, buffs, purples, grey, every possible tint of these, and the hills in the distance blue, that special blue which distance alone can attain, the blue of dreams, the blue of hopes floating on the horizon of one's consciousness.

And into these half-tones long rambling voyages of discovery over moor and hill, along quiet dales and beside the brown burns, brown with the brownness of certain hazel eyes that have in them a green light, and these little burns were full of red-spotted trout. Underfoot, stones, heather or moss; great soft cushions, grey and elastic, forerunners of swampy places. How we loved these lichen-coloured mounds of moss; we would endeavour to uproot them without breaking them in two, but when the difficult feat was achieved they were always too heavy to carry home. But there was something quite special about that grey moss; there were wide and often boggy stretches of it which gave the

soil an eerie look, as though it were coated with mildew in great lumps, and this mildew colour blended softly with the horizon; there was no line separating the two; the whole world was hazy, indefinite, nebulous, it was as though you were advancing into a grey dream.

But above all there was the heather, that wonderful rolling carpet of purple, with an undergrowth of rust, which added that warmth of colour which so completely satisfied the beauty-loving eye. Over hill and dale, as far as gaze could reach, purple; a grand spread of violet, a royal mantle extended over this northern world.

There were also foggy days that covered you with a million tears, weighing your eyelashes down with heavy moisture, spreading a haze of dew over whatever you wore. Then too were dream walks in a world that had no definite shape, no definite colour, just spheres of cold vapour, with an occasional lifting of the veil, revealing shadowy flocks of sheep, phantom shapes moving over phantom worlds, with a spectre going before them slowly leading them into the land of wraiths.

Wrapped in their grey plaids, their collies at their heels, those gaunt Highland shepherds were indeed the spirits of the mist.

Grandmamma came to Balmoral in the autumn, if I rightly remember. This was the home of her heart. She dearly loved her "Scotchies," almost every inhabitant was a personal acquaintance and even the royal apartments were hung and upholstered with Balmoral tartan; carpets, chairs, curtains, everything was striped with greys, reds and black. This form of decoration was more patriotic than artistic and had a way of flickering before your eyes and confusing your brain.

Here also, though the life led in the Highlands was more cosy and homelike, less official and severe, Grandmamma spread that atmosphere so peculiar to her, here too her presence was felt in all things, even when she was not actually seen.

Queen Victoria! Even then she was becoming an almost legendary figure; how much more so, therefore, to-day when looking back upon her! She had lasted so long that one could hardly imagine the world continuing to turn without her.

In a way she was the arbiter of our different fates. For all members of her family her "yes" and her "no" counted tremendously. She was not averse from interfering in the most private questions. She was the

central power directing things. Even Mamma, who, according to us, was omnipotent, had to count with Queen Victoria, had to listen to her, and if she had not exactly to *obey*, had anyhow to argue out all differences of opinion. But as she was strong-willed and autocratic, I can imagine that these arguments were tough.

The grand little old lady in her white widow's cap and her flounced black silk gown, who seldom raised her voice, except when accentuating certain words, was a tremendous, sometimes almost a fearful force.

Right into their ripe years her sons and daughters were in great awe of "dearest Mamma"; they avoided discussing her will, and her veto made them tremble. They spoke to her with bated breath, and even when not present she was never mentioned except with lowered voice.

Looking back upon Queen Victoria, especially from these days of negation, I cannot help marvelling at the prestige she possessed. There was something fetish-like about it. I sometimes wonder if she realized this tremendous effect she had upon others, if she was conscious of that atmosphere that emanated from her, if it was *really* due to her personality or to the religious "hush" others created around her.

It is natural that children should be awed in the presence of one who was like the earth around which satellites circled, but that this should affect great and small alike is wonderful. Was it the times she belonged to, was it because she had lasted so long? Was it because she lived so shut away from the world, surrounding herself with that atmosphere of mournful abstinence from all joys of life? I do not pretend to be able to answer these questions, I was too young then, and later, when grown up, I saw too little of her. The fact remains that she was a tremendous presence, if not personality, and her places, whilst she breathed within their walls, had something of shrines about them, which were approached with awe not unmixed with anxiety.

There was also a quite special thrill when from afar you saw Grandmamma's outrider come trotting down the road ahead of her carriage. Grandmamma never drove without an outrider.

Solemn-faced, in a livery as impeccably black and neat as the clothes of a bishop, mounted on a stolid dappled grey, groomed to the superlative perfection only English stables can attain, this forerunner of the Royal Presence would appear round the bend of the road. Trot, trot,

trot, trot, the very sound made your heart beat with expectation. That black-coated rider with a face that never smiled, never in fact expressed anything but almost magnificent reliability, was more uniquely royal and effective than any flare of trumpets or bright-coated military escort could have been. Trot, trot, trot, trot, and here was her Majesty's carriage drawn by greys as superbly sleek and well-bred as the one who had heralded their coming; and seated within the open barouche, a wee little old lady with an exquisitely old-fashioned hat and antediluvian, sloping-shouldered mantle, black, with sometimes a touch of white. Nothing showy about her, no attempt at effect of any kind, the whole turn-out simple, unadorned, but what a thrill the passing of that simple carriage gave you.

Trot, trot, trot, trot, deep curtsies, the waving of hands and handkerchiefs, smiles on every face, a responding smile from the little old lady in the carriage—only just a glimpse—but how the memory remained with you. Trot, trot . . . a diminishing sound. You stood staring after the carriage, the horses, the outrider, trot, trot . . . fainter, fainter . . . till it died quite away. . . .

Grandmamma Queen!

We did not see much of Grandmamma during that autumn, but I remember one drive with her to a far-off loch amongst the hills, called Due or Dhu Loch.

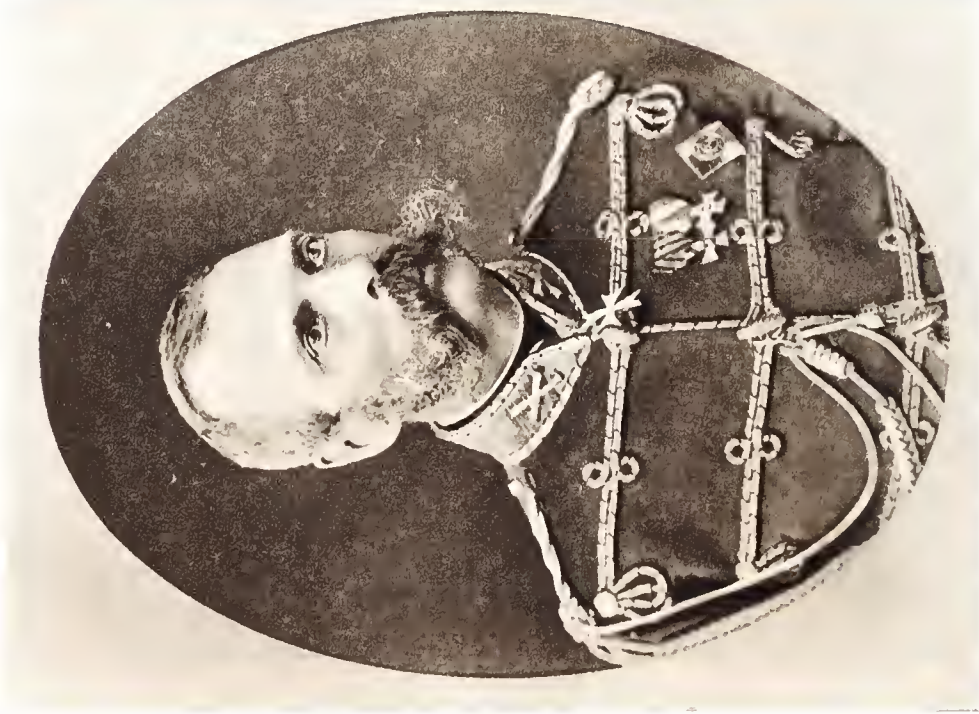
Grandmamma's drives were a very essential part of her well-regulated life. She drove out every single day, no matter what the weather and almost always in an open carriage. No rain, storm or cold stopped her, her drives were as inevitable as sunrise or sunset, no event good or bad, not even a catastrophe seemed to make any difference to Grandmamma's drives. And into the bargain they were exceedingly lengthy drives.

Round about Balmoral Queen Victoria had had small stone houses built at the different spots where she was most fond of driving, and tea was often taken at one or the other of these little houses. She then returned home, if possible by another route.

The only time in Scotland I remember having been honoured by an invitation to drive with Grandmamma was to this far-off Due Loch, and my excitement was great.



GRANDMAMMA QUEEN—QUEEN VICTORIA



GRANDPAPA EMPEROR; THE EMPEROR
ALEXANDER II



GRANDMAMMA EMPRESS—EMPERESS MARIE FEDEROVNA,
WITH MY BROTHER ALFRED AS A BABY

I have but a vague memory of the road leading to the Due Loch, but the loch itself I can still see perfectly well. A small, dark, rather sinister-looking loch, lying deep amongst more or less barren hills, stony and grim. Legend would have it that the sun never shone on the Due Loch: that was why it was so sombre, so sad-looking, like a face that never smiled. I stood before its gloomy waters and stared at it with awe. It fascinated me, I felt that all sorts of stories could be woven around its secretive-looking gloom.

"Due" means mournful, and certainly some sinister tale was attached to this lake, but no one told it to me then and now I have no one to ask; the grown-ups probably never realized how much I would have liked to *know* why the sun never shone into the Due Loch! It is also probable that I never asked; children are often curiously reticent in asking for explanations about things that interest them, particularly when they have only overheard a conversation, and its story had not been especially told to *them*. They are afraid of making fools of themselves, not quite sure if they had been supposed to listen or not.

All my English uncles and aunts were curiously absent-minded. They only occasionally seemed to wake up to the consciousness that you were there at all; they also had a disconcerting way of seeming to draw you into a conversation, and when you responded, their minds had already wandered far away, and your timid answer found itself lost on the air, a poor forlorn and ashamed thing, suddenly despised and homeless.

There was no intentional unkindness in this, it was simply that at one moment you existed for them and at the next their thoughts had already taken such an entirely different channel that they simply felt and saw you no more.

But children want to be very much seen, felt and heard, and those who make you feel thinner than air humiliate you terribly.

Even our father had this absent-mindedness, characteristic of the family; he sometimes simply looked through you.

Mamma had one great joy at Balmoral. There were quantities of mushrooms, or at least what Mamma called mushrooms, but which people in England contemptuously termed toadstools. All Russians are great connoisseurs of mushrooms and in their country exquisite dishes are made of them. There is an especial kind with thick, stony stems and

brown-grey heads. In Germany these are called *Steinpilze* and are a great delicacy. The kind Mamma gathered in such quantities at Balmoral were second cousins to these, poorer relations, but just as delicious when well prepared with a cream sauce spiced with a certain herb. This species has a predilection for growing under birch trees.

Mamma would bring home basketfuls of these, but to her great mortification the royal cooks only admitted the well-known common white mushrooms which are pink inside; all others were suspicious and nothing would induce them to serve up that "Russian stuff" on the Queen of England's table.

It was on this occasion that I first heard the expression "toadstool," which was certainly a most disdainful way of denominating Mamma's precious gatherings. She had much fun with Grandmamma over this, and finally, I believe, the royal kitchen was prevailed upon to cook these uncertain looking vegetables and everybody, even the most insular inhabitant of the court, thoroughly enjoyed them.

In Russia, mushroom-picking is a veritable science, there are no end of good mushrooms (or call them toadstools if you prefer), and at an early age Mamma had made real experts of her children. We could, without the slightest hesitation, distinguish the good from the bad, the harmless from the poisonous.

Mushroom-hunting is good fun, but it was never my speciality. Ducky had inherited Mamma's passion for this form of amusement, and my daughter Elisabeth in her turn has continued the tradition, she can spend hours hunting for mushrooms. Somehow I was awkward about finding mushrooms, which was a great humiliation to me. I would bring only three or four to Ducky's dozens, and this I felt as a really painful inferiority, an inferiority that was well rubbed into me. I even remember a comic-tragic scene in connexion with one of these mushroom-hunts; but this was at Coburg, not at Balmoral.

Mamma had a Russian diplomat friend called Count Lamsdorf (nephew of the famous Count Lamsdorf), an exceedingly well-mannered, pale, fair, nice-looking young man. We little girls were not quite sure if we liked Count Lamsdorf; over-correct and rather effeminate, he was a frequent guest in our house, but his correctness never melted into anything more than tepid joviality.

One day we had all gone mushroom-hunting in a wood well known as

good ground for that special kind of sport. Elegant and polite to a degree even out in the woods, Count Lamsdorf had also been enlisted amongst the ranks of the mushroom-pickers.

Everybody had found quantities except me, who seemed to have no eyes in my head. It was quite like searching for Easter eggs and I positively seemed to have been smitten with blindness. At certain moments the searchers came together from the different ends of the forest to compare their finds, but each time my basket was empty.

By degrees I was growing exasperated, but was for a time able to mask my discomfiture with a smile on the wrong side of my mouth. Little knowing how near the end of my patience I was, everybody began to tease me and I felt deeply humiliated.

Finally a signal was given that the search was at an end and everybody flocked together to examine each other's harvest. Mine was poor—I had hardly anything to show and the teasing began anew. Count Lamsdorf, who had been lucky, added his few polite words of mockery to the louder raillery of the others. But this was just too much. His innocent words made the cup of my bitterness overflow and to the horror of my mother and the discomfiture of my sisters, like the real little fool that I was, I burst into tears.

Dismay on all sides! I even managed to bring out a few words laden with resentment which I hurled at the head of the much-abashed count who, for some reason, had become in my eyes the chief offender. I am afraid that I was even thoroughly rude, for I was no longer mistress of my emotions.

Mamma used all the tact she could trying to pooh-pooh the stupid fuss I was making. The much-puzzled guest, full of remorse, pronounced words of humblest repentance, but I stolidly maintained my absurd attitude of offence.

Finally, taking me kindly by the shoulders, Mamma pushed me towards the mortified gentleman:

"Va, ma chère, embrasse le Comte et que tout soit oublié." *Embrasse le Comte!* Kiss him! Consternation. He was not a cousin nor an uncle; he was only a disconcertingly ceremonious gentleman with pale cheeks and paler hair, and much too polite to be looked upon as a friend. Kiss him—I was dumbfounded.

"Child, go on, don't make a fuss!"

And there, with the whole forest as witness, with my sisters gaping at me open-mouthed but full of pity, I actually had to kiss that pale and over-correct gentleman, who, almost as shy as I, took off his hat—(Oh, I well remember that taking off of his hat!)—so as to meet worthily this scene of reconciliation.

But was it reconciliation? Ah, there's the rub. It was an unheard-of happening, but reconciliation?

I am afraid that from that day onwards, poor Count Lamsdorf was a thorn in my flesh, and each one of his visits was a torture to the foolish little girl who was never again able to forget that, one day, with all the trees of the wood looking on, she had had to kiss him, an over-polite gentleman who was neither uncle nor cousin. . . .

In childhood your parents' friends play a great part. Some you admit directly, they know how to gain your confidence, they become your friends too. Against others for some reason you nurse a certain prejudice, probably most unfairly, but you simply cannot like them, they do not fit in.

Then there are those precious few who, even if they pay no particular attention to you, are passionately admired and adored from the first moment, sometimes simply because you admire their looks, and sometimes just because there is that strange inexplicable affinity between you and them, that magnetism which attracts beings to each other for no apparent reason—it just *is*.

All through life I was inordinately attracted to a beautiful face, and I remember certain guests who were received at Eastwell that shone with a star-like radiance that I never again forgot. They were real events.

Two women, very different in type, belong to this category. One was Lady (Georgina) Dudley, the other was Lady Randolph Churchill.

Lady Dudley, as also Lady (Helen) Vincent, has always remained my ideal of typical English beauty. There was a perfection about Lady Dudley's loveliness which is unforgettable though I saw her but very seldom.

Lady Randolph was a more flashing beauty, and might almost be taken for an Italian or a Spaniard. Her eyes were large and dark, her

mouth mobile with delicious, almost mischievous curves, her hair blue-black and glossy, she had something of a Creole about her. She was very animated and laughed a lot, showing beautiful white teeth, and always looked happy and amused.

For some reason she and my mother were very good friends: I was much too young to know what attracted them to each other, because they were certainly very different, but we used to see them often together, and we entirely approved of Lady Randolph.

Mamma would play duets with her on the piano in the big Eastwell library. We were often in the room during the time, occupied with our own games, the two ladies absorbed in their music quite forgetting our presence. It still makes me smile to remember how one day Ducky and I were amusing ourselves with a pair of mechanical frogs which had been given to us, green tin monsters that when wound up, crouched, hesitating awhile, then made sudden, most disconcerting leaps at the moment you least expected. These frogs were an endless source of amusement.

I cannot recollect which of us hit upon the idea of setting these springing creatures under the chairs of the two music enthusiasts, but what fun it would be!

We well realized that, carried away on the wings of melody, they were entirely oblivious of our existence. From time to time, one or the other would exclaim at the difficulty of certain passages, there would be a second's hesitation, a little apologetic laugh, and then they would be off again as though their lives depended upon their fingers.

Softly we two miscreants stole over the floor, as quiet as mice, no sound revealing our nearness, and set our jumping freaks under the chairs of our betters. No two Red Indians could have made a more wily approach.

The springing creatures crouched, hesitated and sprang, right upon the heels of the piano players! It had been superbly calculated, the effect was instantaneous and complete.

Shrieks, laughter! And of course a scolding. But the scolding was drowned by the laughter and I remember Lady Randolph's white teeth and Mamma's apology for her children's misbehaviour.

Another peculiarity of Lady Randolph's was a special sort of comb that she wore at the back of her chignon, a light tortoise-shell comb

decorated with little round knobs. This comb I admired tremendously; it certainly added to that Spanish look she had and was just exactly the sort of comb she should have worn.

Certain details of dress used to strike me at an early age and they still remain sticking in my memory whilst more important facts have been entirely wiped out.

There was, for instance, a ruby-red bonnet, oh yes, a *bonnet*, because in those days that was both the smart and correct thing for married ladies to wear. There was a great difference in my childhood between what a young girl and a married lady wore. In our times, the Granny can easily be seen in the same dress, or *almost*, as her granddaughter, dancing at her first ball! If I am exaggerating, forgive me, but I do not think that I am far wrong.

This ruby-red velvet bonnet that I remember was worn by a certain Frau von Königseck (who shall be spoken of later) when one day she came to meet my parents at the Coburg station. It was a quite flat affair with a broad bow on the top and was fixed by a piece of red velvet ribbon under her chin. Queen Alexandra was photographed in bonnets of this shape.

Frau von Königseck was neither elegant nor pretty, but her bonnet was, according to my childish appreciation, lovely, and has remained unforgettable to this day.

But there was especially a certain dress worn by an aunt during the time of Queen Victoria's first Jubilee that I still have in mind. The aunt was Louisa of Coburg, wife of Uncle Philip of Coburg-Kohary, brother of King Ferdinand of Bulgaria. She was the eldest daughter of King Leopold II of Belgium and one of the *Grandes Élégantes* of her time. Her love for dress, in fact, was what the Puritans would have called sinful, and was certainly ruinous and did much to make of her a difficult wife.

Otherwise she was a good-natured if somewhat foolish lady who loved to be paid attention, even if it was only to be teased by others. In fact, she was very much disappointed when one forgot to tease her. She wanted to be teased about her clothes, her habits, her ideas, her flirtations. She loved to be considered somewhat eccentric, which she was in a way that was innocent enough, had it not been so expensive.

We children called her Aunt Philipa, which, according to us, cleverly united her and her husband's names, Philip and Louisa.

Aunt Philipa was, because of the exaggerated number of her clothes, a grand source of interest to us younger ones. It was like going to the theatre. Even when she only came for a few days, she would bring so many hats that no cupboards sufficed, so she generally pinned them all the way up the curtains, as far as her arms could reach.

There was a memorable occasion at Reinhardsbrunn when two of her hats were burnt on a stove and one was eaten up by the dogs! Aunt Philipa was very fair and had the small eyes and long nose of her father, but all the same she was a decorative person in a showy sort of way and dress helped her greatly, though Mamma of course thoroughly disapproved of the eccentricity of her fashions.

She had a killing way of laughing, her nose playing a great part and her eyes nearly disappearing during the process; it was besides a slow laugh which began gradually and went on for a long time increasing in volume, even after everybody else had finished their laugh. She seemed to relish, so to say, the physical pleasure of laughing.

My parents poked fun at her all the time and this used to make her expand with a sort of childish glee. Her absurdities were discussed and everybody made a point of inquiring with exaggerated interest how many dresses, hats, cloaks, tea-gowns, etc., she had brought with her. Clothes in fact were her very *raison d'être*.

She would change her attire at every hour of the day, and there was always a little bag, or so-called reticule, to match each dress, and goodness only knows with what these mysterious little bags were filled; powder and paint, mirror, scents and sachets, smoking pastilles, nail polish, cigarettes, and so on. She was always fiddling about in her little reticule.

During the Jubilee she was our parents' guest at Clarence House, and her toilettes were the excitement of the whole household from the scullery-maid to the lady-in-waiting. The memorable dress in question was an astonishing creation; one mass of small beads shimmering between fire-red and sapphire blue. I had never before seen anything like this dress nor perhaps since! It was a "stunner" as the schoolboy would have said; it knocked you down and, as it was in the time of the bustle, it was not only astonishing as to colour, but complicated as to shape.

She received ovations from all sides and, much gratified, started one of her slow long laughs that went on and on increasing in volume, whilst she screwed up her small eyes till they almost vanished.

Later on Aunt Philipa disappeared out of our lives and her end was less gay and brilliant than her beginning. Poor Aunt Philipa!

Before I begin describing our time at Malta, which is the happiest memory of my life, I would like you to follow me on a flying visit to Russia, that great, mysterious, stupendous Russia of the Tsars, now so tragically a thing of the past, but which was Mamma's Russia.

You must forgive me if at first I show it to you as I perceived it through my childish vision, with all its phenomenal prestige and grandeur. A formidable erection of power and splendour, comparable to nothing else except, no doubt, the Far East which I have never seen.

Russia! My astonished child's eyes see gigantic palaces, wonderful parks, fountains, gardens. They see astounding family gatherings, military displays, religious ceremonies in churches all glittering with gold. They see jewels so fantastic that you can hardly imagine that they are real, quick trotting horses with flowing manes and tails, and their flanks so shining that you could mirror your face in them. They see whole regiments of Cossacks, wild-looking, but so picturesque that they could fit into the most fantastic tales. And some of these same Cossacks, standing in long red coats, high fur caps and armed to the teeth before the doors of their masters; their breasts are barred with cartridges stuck into silver braid, their heelless black boots have many folds around the ankles and pervade the atmosphere with a pleasant fragrance of Russian leather. My eyes also see long corridors, and, so to say, over-life-sized halls and drawing-rooms, opening out one into the other, and our feet patter timidly over wide expanses of floors, so vast and so polished that we have the impression of walking on ice.

And everywhere a quite special odour; a mixture of turpentine, Russian leather, cigarette smoke and scent, uniquely characteristic of these Imperial palaces.

Imperial is indeed the word, fantastic, fairy-like, legendary, *mille et une nuits*; all superlatives are suitable and permissible in this Russia of the Tsars, this glamour-filled Russia that is no more.

And it is Mamma who is leading us little English girls by the hand,

leading us into all this; Mamma who came out of it all, who belongs to it still, Mamma who makes the sign of the Cross in her own chapel of the many images, which is but a tiny reflection of the huge glory of Russia's churches which once were hers.

Because *all* this *was* hers, before she came to sober England. That giant with the grey hair and closely cut whiskers, with the rather forbidding face but kindly eyes and mouth, is her father, the Emperor, and those younger giants, so many of them that you get quite bewildered, are her brothers and cousins and the other older giants are her uncles. They all bend down to kiss you in turn, they have far to bend because they are tall like trees, and they all smell deliciously of Russian leather, cigarettes and the best sort of scent. I remember them always in uniform, and they are altogether wonderful and unbelievable, quite like people out of fairy-stories that you did not imagine really existed till you went to Russia, Mamma's Russia, the home from which she came.

And everybody loved you and spoilt you and gave you good things to eat or hung lovely little crosses or locketts set with precious stones round your neck. The servants kissed your hands, and at every corner there was some old friend of Mamma's who burst out on you and hugged you and made the sign of the Cross over your forehead. And when you finally reached your own rooms, there on the centre table stood two dishes, one with sweets, the other with biscuits. These biscuits and sweets were renewed each day. The sweets were varied and nowhere else in the wide world were they as good. Long-shaped fruit-drops wrapped in white paper with little fringed edges of blue, red or yellow, according to the sweet inside. Flat cream caramels too luscious for words, these also wrapped in thick white paper, double fondants of coffee, and also those little paper baskets of fresh strawberry sweets already described as one of the "ecstasies."

Then other sweets were brought in big boxes, round slabs of fruit paste, a speciality of Moscow, and dried fruit and berries preserved in white flour-like sugar, a speciality from Kiev.

And when you went out for walks in the park, there was a sailor or two who went with you, specially deputed to look after and amuse the royal and Imperial children during their walks. These sailors became your most cherished friends and companions. Each day when you

stepped over the terrace down into the garden there they stood all smiles with some little surprise ready for you; a bunch of wild strawberries, a wonderful stick half peeled as though a white ribbon had been wound round it, a little wooden flute, a hoop and what not else. The youngest of us, not yet able to walk any distance, was solemnly pushed about in a perambulator in the shape of a silver swan. There were lakes and sand-heaps, wee Russian cottages, and a tiny farm with a real live cow, which belonged to Mamma as a child. (The farm, not the cow, which was certainly no longer the same.)

Those are my first visions of Russia. Emperor Alexander II's Russia, Grandpapa Emperor—Mamma's father. But in my earliest childhood he vanishes from the scene to give place to Alexander III, Uncle Sasha as we called him, Mamma's eldest brother.

It was in London that Mamma heard of her father's assassination. I remember quite well our being brought down to her room and the terrible shock it was to find Mamma in tears.

Mamma weeping, an overwhelming, unheard-of cataclysm. It was something which upset all our ideas about the natural order of things. Children wept, but grown-up people! That was something fundamentally unnatural, something that shook the very basis of our beliefs.

Of course there was consternation in our ranks and a hurried departure was arranged, Mamma, as far as I remember, taking us with her.

But this is all such a long, long time ago, and I was so very small then that I may be mixing things up. But curiously enough I still have a dim recollection of standing at a window of the Winter Palace and seeing an endless and gorgeous funeral procession pass by, but was it Grandpapa's or Grandmamma's funeral? I really do not know. All this is in a haze.

But I do still remember Grandpapa. There are three pictures which remain to me of him. One is of a family breakfast outside on a terrace at Tsarskoye Selo, Grandpapa at the head of the table, I think, and we, as tiny mites, running round from one guest to another with little sand-cakes on the palms of our hands and Grandpapa pretending to taste them.

A rather clearer picture is of Grandpapa coming into the big night-

nursery (this was also at Tsarskoye), where we were down with measles. I was the last to catch the infection and Grandpapa was still able to kiss me.

I can still see through the mist that time is spreading over these remembrances, Grandpapa bending towards me, the tall, tall man to the wee little girl, and how absurdly proud I was that I could still be kissed. But when he came next day I too was amongst the invalids, and I no more than the others dared ask for a kiss.

The third picture is of Grandpapa in a small carriage driving a wonderful trotter, coal-black and as shiny as a shield. Mamma is seated beside him and I am standing between his knees. That is all, and even that is so blurred that it might have been only a dream.

Of Grandmamma Empress my recollections are still more vague. On a journey somewhere we were brought to her in the train. She was lying on a very low bed that was all draped in sky blue. I have the hazy vision of a pale emaciated woman with a thin, waxen face and long, white, beautiful hands. I remember we had been taken away from our tea which did not please us very much, and we stared "non-understandingly" at the very sad-looking woman in her blue-curtained bed.

I think that she was being transported somewhere to the South of France. She had already been an invalid for several years, and, as I have heard since, had more reasons than ill-health for being sad.

That is my only recollection of Grandmamma Empress, Mamma's Mamma.

CHAPTER IV

RUSSIAN MEMORIES

LATER pictures of Russia are clearer, and yet they are so hazy as to be enveloped in a glamour so great that in looking back it all appears dreamlike, almost unreal, and I have to make an effort to realize that I was actually there and *lived* it all, not merely imagined it.

Tsarskoye, Peterhof, Krasnoe, St. Petersburg, that was the setting, but the pictures I see are detached, merge one into the other, pass before my mind in little bits. Dates, circumstances, the whys and wherefores are all vague, entirely vague.

The family was a large one. My mother had five brothers living: Alexander, Vladimir, Alexis, Serge and Paul. Her eldest brother Nicolas had died at Nice as quite a young man, of consumption I have been told. Four brothers were already married in the days I am speaking of. In addition there were no end of other uncles, aunts and cousins, so many of them in fact that I never quite made out who they all were, especially as they were of several generations, two or three great-uncles and aunts being still alive. Some were of less importance, uncles, aunts and cousins several times removed, descendants of side lines, but for all big occasions, for feast-days, for parades and church ceremonies, the family would flock together, and there would be huge family meetings, a regular review of uncles, aunts and cousins near or far removed, as numerous as trees in a wood.

This was most interesting, but also very confusing, as we came almost as strangers into this great family gathering and everybody exclaimed about how much we had grown, etc. etc.

Nothing could have been a greater contrast than the English and Russian uncles and aunts. I must confess that in my childhood the Russian uncles were surrounded by a much greater glamour. Our admiration for them was not unmixed, however, with dread; they were so formidably tall, big and splendid, and besides, they were inveterate teases.

The English uncles were absent-minded, they looked through you; the Russian relations never looked through you, in fact, they were if anything too aware of your existence and teased you mercilessly; always, on all occasions, public or otherwise, they teased you.

It would carry me too far to begin to describe them all, but some of their faces are still so vivid, so full of interest for me at least, that I must draw some of their portraits, make them live once more as I saw them.

There was Uncle Sasha, Emperor Alexander III, a giant of a man, broad, powerful, good-natured, kindly, less terrible than some of the uncles in spite of his crown and of his "over-life-size." He had a chestnut beard and kindly blue eyes, his way with us children was jovial and encouraging, and I remember him particularly in connexion with some special fun he had imagined would amuse both the young and grown-ups.

In the garden stood a mast on which his sons learned how to climb and handle ropes and sails, still an essential part of ships in those days. To guard against bad falls a net had been stretched beneath this mast.

Uncle Sasha loved a good laugh, so he had come upon the absurdly delightful idea of taking his guests out after lunch to this net and making them run and jump about on it. I can remember no game that ever made us laugh as much as this one, and the fun reached its climax when giant Uncle Sasha, whose weight was formidable, climbed on to the net himself. This was the superlative moment of excitement that we children always waited for with a delight not unmixed with fear. Uncle Sasha would pursue us over this net, and when he had cornered you he would jump up and down and his weight made you bounce like a ball. Higher and higher you bounced as though you had no weight at all, and you had hardly come down to your feet than there you were, up in the air again, up and down, up and down, shrieking and laughing, terrified and enchanted; a game for the gods.

That was Uncle Sasha as *we* saw him; I leave it to history to make whatever other portrait it chooses.

Aunt Minnie, his wife, was Queen Alexandra's sister. Without having her beauty, she had Aunt Alix's charm. She was deliciously amiable and much loved, but she does not play a great part in my memories

though she is the only one of that huge family circle still alive as I write these lines. She was a devoted mother and wife and truly the centre of her world, both at home and as Empress.

In those days there were five cousins, Nicky, Georgie, Xenia, Misha, and Olga, who was quite small. Nicky we always loved and admired, although, being older, he was rather beyond our reach in those days.

Already, at that early age, he had that gentle charm and that kind, caressing look in his eyes, which was his all through life till the day of his tragic death. Kindly and peace-loving, he did not seem cut out for a fate so horrible.

Georgie, like my mother's eldest brother, died of consumption as quite a young man, somewhere in the Caucasus I believe. Xenia was a dear chum, being a year older than I was. The other two Misha and Olga, were younger than we.

But it was with the other cousins that we were more intimate, the children of Uncle Vladimir and Aunt Miechen.

Uncle Vladimir was my mother's second brother. He was the dark-haired one of the family, exceedingly good-looking but a little less tall than his brothers. Aunt Miechen, his wife, was born Princess of Mecklenburg; although not a regular beauty, she was one of the most fascinating women that ever crossed my path.

There was, I believe, a certain rivalry between Aunt Miechen and Aunt Minnie, and less friendship and good understanding than was politely played up to during those big family gatherings I so vividly remember.

Here there were four cousins, three boys, Kirill, Boris and André, and one daughter, Ellen. They were the most beautiful children imaginable and our friendship outlasted our youth. Much later in life sister Ducky married Kirill, but that will be spoken of in its right place.

Uncle Alexis, Mamma's third brother, was the bachelor of the family. He was of the type of the Vikings, and would also have made a perfect Lohengrin, as Wagner would have dreamed of him. Fair beard, blue eyes, enormous, a superb specimen of humanity, he was besides a sailor, and had a true sailor's love for all the good things of life and of beautiful women in particular.

There was an aunt several times removed who was his "adored" for

many years although she was not free. Zina was her name and she was terribly fascinating. Her eyes were enormous, her jewels beautiful, her skin creamy white, her lips cherry red, and dark circles made her wonderful Oriental eyes still more dangerously languorous.

There was a photograph in Papa's room of Zina in Russian court dress with a *cacoshnic* on her head. I was irresistibly attracted by this picture of lovely Aunt Zina of the mysterious eyes, and I could never make up my mind if it was her eyes or her stupendous jewels that fascinated me most. She too belonged to Russia's splendour, a characteristic product of the world she lived in. Aunt Zina, who was a sister of the celebrated General Scobelew, and married to a Leuchtenberg, was never considered quite one of the Imperial family. She would have made her fortune on the screen as a "vamp," and was, I believe, what our Uncle Paul used so amusingly to term "naughty and imprudent," but her good-nature entirely belied her vamp-like appearance.

It was the sailor uncle who paid me my first compliment and I assure you that I have never forgotten it.

It was at Peterhof and we children came rushing over the lawn to where Mamma was standing in the sunshine with Uncle Alexis. I was leading the onrush, and as we came, Uncle Alexis exclaimed: "Ah! *voici la jolie petite!*" I was "*la jolie petite*" and from then onwards I never forgot this!

But the couple who fascinated me most were Uncle Serge and Aunt Ella. She was the angelic beauty of whom I have already spoken. They were newly married in those days and her beauty and sweetness was a thing of dreams.

Uncle Serge was the brother nearest in age to my mother. She had been brought up with him and Uncle Paul together. In contrast to the three eldest, who, although hugely tall, were broad and thick-set, this uncle was as tall and slim as the proverbial fir tree. He was by far the most frightening of all the uncles, but for all that was our chosen favourite. The extreme "adorableness" of his wife had perhaps something to do with it, but anyhow, Uncle Serge meant a great deal to us.

His name in history will, I fear, remain as that of a fanatic and reactionary, his death was violent and fearful, but I have nothing to do with Grand Duke Serge, Governor of Moscow, who was blown up by

Nihilists; the Uncle Serge I have to do with was severe, kept you in awe, but he loved children, although he was not destined to have any of his own. He scolded us and never let an offence pass unnoticed, but whenever he was able he came to see us in our bath (a concession that, for some reason, all children try to obtain from their elders) or to tuck us up in our beds and to kiss us good night.

Uncle Serge wore a close-cropped fair beard; his lips were thin and closed in a firm line that was almost cruel. Especially in the long dark green tunic, baggy trousers, high boots and small white astrakhan cap of his full dress uniform, he was a magnificent though somewhat forbidding figure. As abrupt of movement as he was short of speech, he had a particular way of holding his hands in front of him, the fingers of one hand clasping the wrist of the other, making a chain bracelet he wore continually jingle against his cuff. His eyes were steely grey and his pupils could narrow like those of a cat, till they became mere pin-points, and then there was something almost menacing about him. But oh, how handsome he was, so inconceivably upright, with such a magnificent figure, though no doubt there was in his face something of the fanatic that he was at heart.

But when I looked up at him with the confident, adoring eyes of a little girl who knew naught of the hard, cruel and unkind things of this world, his steely eyes would soften for a moment, though perhaps his look never became really warm or reassuring.

I must admit that even at his sweetest moments, there was nothing soft nor particularly encouraging about Uncle Serge; there was a tyrant within him, ready at any moment to burst forth; there was something intolerant, unbending about him; instinctively one felt that his teeth were clenched.

Dry, nervous, short of speech, impatient, he had none of the rather careless good-humour of his three elder brothers; he was, in fact, completely another type. But for all that we loved him, felt irresistibly attracted to him, hard though he could be.

Few perhaps cherish his memory, but I do.

In contrast to her severe lord and master (and in this case these terms may be taken literally) Aunt, or Cousin Ella, was all sweetness and feminine charm.

By birth, though a good many years our senior, she was our first cousin, being the daughter of my father's second sister, the late Grand Duchess Alice of Hesse. By marriage she became our aunt and as we were much younger, at an age when a few years makes a difference, we generally gave her her dignity of aunt.

Uncle Serge was often abrupt and severe with her as he was with everyone, but he adored her beauty. Being very young and innocent when she married him, he had something of the schoolmaster attitude towards her and I can still see the adorable blush that would suffuse her cheeks when he reproved her, and he did this often, no matter where or before whom.

"Mais Serge . . ." she would then exclaim, and the expression of her face was like that of a schoolgirl detected in some fault. Only to remember her still makes my heart melt within me.

She too had wonderful jewels, and Uncle Serge, who worshipped her in spite of his scoldings, would invent all sorts of reasons and occasions for giving her magnificent presents; she had besides a special talent for wearing her clothes, in a way quite her own. Of course everything suited her, for she was tall, slim and incredibly graceful, and no blush rose could have competed with her complexion.

There was also something of a lily about her; her purity was absolute; one could never take one's eyes off her, and when parting from her in the evening one longed for the hour when one would behold her again next day.

The Russian court dress was exceedingly picturesque, and was donned for all bigger occasions. It consisted of amply cut velvet robes over a *tablier* of white satin; the shape, with its train, and wide, long-hanging sleeves, had something mediæval about it. These robes were heavily embroidered in silver or gold and were of every colour of the rainbow; the richest of all were of cloth of gold or silver.

A halo-shaped *cacoshnic* with a veil hanging from beneath it inevitably accompanied this costume, so that every woman appeared to have been crowned. This unity of attire made all Russian court gatherings uniquely picturesque, saturating them with colour and brilliance unlike anything else; veritable pictures out of the "Thousand and One Nights," Byzantine in splendour, with all the mysterious gorgeousness of the East. In those days the processional entry of the Russian Im-

perial family into festive hall or saint-haunted church was a picture once seen never to be forgotten.

Aunt Ella on these occasions was so fairy-like an apparition that I would like to dip my pen in colour so as to be able to make her live again, if only for a moment, because eyes that have never beheld her will never be able to conceive what she was then.

Here she comes! With that divine smile curving her perfect lips, with a blush on her cheeks only comparable to almond blossom and an almost bashful look in her long-shaped, sky-pure eyes. She is holding in her hand a few sprigs of lily-of-the-valley, her favourite flower; her gown, heavily embroidered in silver, is a colour which is neither blue nor green, the colour of glaciers or of aquamarines.

Her *cacoshnic* of emeralds and diamonds is truly a halo to her angelic face, and the gorgeous gems covering arms and throat have, when she wears them, the aspect of gifts piously offered to some beloved saint.

Tall, slim, graceful and infinitely gracious, a vision, a joy for the eyes, for the soul, for the heart. Yes, a vision! One feels like kneeling down when she passes in the hope of being able to touch, if only for a second, the hem of her gown.

Aunt Ella! Beautiful, beautiful woman, may something of that love I felt for you reach you in that far country where you lie in a martyr's tomb.

You are now at rest in the Holy Land, victim of a world too dark for your light, but for all that, victorious eternally, for nothing can tarnish your memory. It was only your earthly beauty they were able to do away with, but the memory of your charm, your goodness, your loveliness live with us for ever like a star in the night.

I was but a child when I so worshipped you, but your face was a revelation; the picture I still have of it is one that no ugliness of life can ever efface. Your end was tragic, abominable, not to be thought of, a blot upon the history of humanity, but you did exist *once*, and blood cannot wipe out the vision of you passing before me like a blessed apparition in your gown the colour of glaciers, colour of aquamarine. . . .

Family gatherings, parades, banquets, church ceremonies, these are

the pictures of festive Russia that, when I look back, flicker before my astonished, child's eyes.

Great fields with troops standing in endless rows, flags flying, music, trumpets, and the Tsar riding slowly down the front. He says some magic word to each regiment as he passes and, as response, a thousand, thousand voices mount towards the heavens with a shout of joy.

Behind him come innumerable Grand Dukes, generals, military followers. Uniforms of every colour, and especially conspicuous, the bright red, caftan-like coats, silver braiding and enormous fur caps of the Cossacks of the Guard; a wonderful regiment mounted on small, dishevelled, wild-looking horses whose heads are held curiously high by their riders seated on their saddles as if on thrones. They are certainly by far the most picturesque of all the troops, and have about them an air of the steppes. There is something fierce and at the same time curiously gentlemanly about them, well in keeping with legends of waste lands and rocky mountains at the end of the world.

Closely following the Emperor and his suite comes the Empress in an open carriage drawn by four horses *à la Daumont*. All in white, she smiles graciously in response to her share of the cheers. A Grand Duchess or an honoured guest sits beside her. I have seen two Empresses in succession driving thus down the front.

The sun shines golden on the resplendent array, it lights up in my memory a picture of might and splendour, of pomp and power, that has for ever passed away.

And if I close my eyes I can hear the deep and heart-stirring strains of the Russian Anthem swelling towards Heaven like a prodigious hymn. Of all National Anthems the Russian was the most solemn, the most impressive, the most compelling; it made you catch your breath, stirred you to the very foundations of your being; some deep emotion thrilled through you from head to foot.

And here I am in church, a wee bit of a child, staring with wide-open eyes at the fantastic gorgeousness of the sanctuary in which the Imperial family has come to petition or to render thanks unto God.

Gold everywhere, hundreds of lighted tapers, and before me the mysterious threshold over which a woman's foot dare not tread, the Holy of Holies shut off by a rood-screen of gold, shielding from my

uninitiated gaze mysteries in which I have no share. I am full of reverence, but feel small, of no consequence, almost an intruder; all the others are at home here, but I am a little stranger, one to whom none of this is familiar. And as though to spread a veil before my eyes, clouds of incense float like a mist between me and all I see.

Whilst I gaze enraptured at all this glory, transported into a world of enchantment, stupendous voices fill the vaulted roof with chants so solemn and so beautiful that they make me tremble with some unknown emotion. There is especially a bass so powerful, so resonant, that instinctively you hold your breath. Is it possible that human voice can reach such a volume? It is like a deep bell, the church seems too small to contain its vibrations, it is almost as though it would burst its walls to allow the sky to look in!

Furtively I peep around me; what are the others feeling? Those who belong here, those to whom all this fantastic splendour is nothing new? Shyly my eyes search every face. Was there ever a nobler, more imposing company, men more huge, women more beautiful and more gorgeously attired, and where in the whole wide world could one see such jewels?

In the places of honour stand Uncle Sasha and Aunt Minnie—in those days Emperor and Empress. Her golden robe is all covered with silver embroidery, and she is crowned with a tiara of sapphires so large that they resemble enormous eyes; cascades of pearls and diamonds hang round her throat down to her waist. She is the only one amongst the royal ladies whose gown is barred by the blue Order of St. Andrew, whilst all the Grand Duchesses wear the red ribbon of St. Catherine.

Close behind the Empress stands Aunt Miechen. More gorgeous than the sunset is her gold-embroidered orange gown. Each time she moves the pear-shaped pearls of her diadem sway gently backwards and forwards. She is not thin enough for classical lines but she wears her clothes better than any other woman present; her shoulders are superb and as white as cream; there is a smartness about her that no one else can attain. And there beside her stands my mother, curiously at home in that radiant assembly, much more at home than she is in London or Windsor. Her gown is deep gentian blue, trimmed with sable, and the rubies she wears are like enormous drops of blood.

Aunt Ella the angelic is clothed in "old pink" and silver and her

perfect face is crowned with diamonds like flashing rays of light.

There are also many more aunts and cousins, some old, some young, also some little girls and boys of my age, but their faces are less clear than those of their elders.

Amongst the several ancients, Aunt Sani, a chip of the old block, stands like a proud pillar of the past generation. Mother of Olga, Queen of Greece, she is a magnificent presence. Clothed all in silver, as upright as a tree, she is tall and imposing; age has not bent her shoulders, nor bowed her head. The diamonds on her white hair are like hoar-frost on snow. She wears more pearls than anyone present; they fall in thick cascades over the red ribbon of her order, she is quite aware of what suits her, is indeed a proud old ancestor amongst those so much younger.

And what an array of uniforms! How tall are all my uncles and cousins! I am almost afraid to look up at them, but how superbly handsome some of them are! There are, it must also be confessed, one or two really ugly old uncles amongst them, but they are outnumbered by the others, are but shadows heightening their brilliance. My eyes drop them immediately to take possession once again of those who fascinate me like so many figures in an incredible dream.

How intent they all are, how full of worship, how reverent! God for them is a reality; however crowned their heads may be they bow them humbly before a Presence recognized as greater than theirs.

The curtains are drawn back from before the altar doors, priests old and young file down the steps. Dark, fair or grey, their hair is long and extraordinarily glossy as are also their beards. They are as gorgeous as the rest of the picture, their vestments are of gold and silver, superbly woven with ancient designs, the jewelled crosses on their breasts flash like living lights, and their faces strangely resemble the icons before which they bend—St. Nicholas, St. Andrew, St. John. . . .

The church is full of the fumes of incense, and I am getting a little giddy; unaccustomed to stand so long, my feet begin to ache. I catch Mamma's eye, she smiles at me encouragingly, but puts a finger to her lips: "Patience," she seems to say. Little Protestant that I am, I must not disgrace her; then, turning again towards the priests, as one enraptured by some great revelation, fervently she makes the sign of the Cross.

Mamma is at home here ; Mamma belongs to them ; her soul is theirs, Mamma is part of Russia—Mamma . . .

And one summer's night, a dream passed before my eyes, so wonderful was its beauty that, in writing it down, I have almost the feeling that I am inventing one of my own fairy-stories.

It is the Empress's Name's Day. Name days play (or must I say played?) a great part in Russia.

Like Mamma and myself, Aunt Minnie's real name is Marie ; that is to say, she was given that name when she became Orthodox. Originally as Princess of Denmark she was christened Dagmar in the Protestant Church.

The day of St. Mary Magdalen, our patron saint, luckily falls in the middle of summer, so great outdoor festivities could take place.

The morning would begin with one of those big church ceremonies I have just described ; then, if I remember rightly, there was a parade, and in the evening the lakes and fountains of Peterhof would be lit up and a ballet arranged on one of the islands. This, anyhow, was the programme of that *jour de fête* I remember so many years ago.

What adds to the haziness of my memories is the fact that the evening festivity took place at an hour when we were generally in bed, so to my astonished eyes it was in every way a magic scene, a night that had nothing to do with everyday realities.

The Imperial family did not inhabit the big palace at Peterhof, but smaller houses they had had built for themselves, the chief being called "The Farm."

The big palace of Peterhof is a magnificent building of the time of Catherine the Great, its chief beauty being its gardens and fountains which descend in broad terraces to the water's edge in the style of Versailles.

The palace faces the broad lake, which is in reality an arm of the Baltic Sea.

On this memorable night the fountains were illuminated with different colours. The gold and the ruby-red were an especially fantastic sight, but the climax of the evening was to be the ballet on one of the islands.

I remember that embarking for the enchanted isle ; verily it was as

though we were embarking for the Isle of Cytherea, the classical isle of love. The night was still and clear, almost light in fact, as are those northern nights at mid-summer.

Smooth as a giant mirror reflecting the lights of the fountains as well as the shadows of the boats moving over its surface, the great lake was a sea of mystery. It was like setting out upon the wings of fantasy; a grey, sweet dream in which all voices and faces are unreal but friendly—happy faces, faces of goodwill, and voices that could pronounce kind words only, or sing songs of love.

Splash, splash, the soft sound of oars alone broke the silence. Seated side by side we children held our breath so as not to awake out of the ecstasy that held us enthralled. We wished it would go on for ever and ever.

But finally the enchanted isle was reached, an oasis of trees, and against this lovely green background a fairy masque, light, exquisite, ephemeral; dancers floating in and out, elves, fairies, nymphs. Colours deliciously blended, rhythmical movements to the strains of meltingly sweet dance music. Shadow shapes, ethereal, immaterial, naiads, will-o'-the-wisps, dream figures, bodiless, soulless . . . illusions of the brain.

Did I really see it all or did I not? So vaporous is the memory that it might have all been illusionary, but no, no, it was real! This also was part of Russia, of the Russia that was, of the fantastic, gorgeous Russia, almost Asiatic in splendour, a pageant of might and power. An illusion, a house of cards, a thing that was, a thing that crumbled, a thing that is no more.

But now for a change, the picture of a more substantial figure, one that has nothing to do with dream shapes, naiads or will-o'-the-wisps, but the picture of Countess Alexandrine Tolstoy, Mamma's old governess, one of the bogies of our youth.

A mighty old lady was Alexandrine Tolstoy. She had been mighty in my mother's youth and was still so in our time. Her physical peculiarity was a series of double chins which had become, with age, flabby and limp like emptied leather sacks. Her face was large, but her nose with its wide open nostrils was somehow too small for it. Owing to some accident she had lost the middle finger of her left hand. This had

given her a nervous tic and she kept rubbing the points of her two other fingers together over the stump of the missing digit, and then she would pass them along the side of her cheek and nose as though scaring away a fly. This nervous movement was repeated indefinitely.

"Old Countess," as we called her, had been a tremendous authority in Mamma's young life and remained so even after she was grown up and had become mother of a family. She continued playing the autocrat also with the younger generation. Her potent personality pervaded the house when she came to visit her former pupil, and we children were eternally being put through our paces for her approval, or perhaps, more correctly, for her disapproval, because the grand old teacher was indeed difficult to please. She was in a great part responsible for that uneasy feeling Mamma was never able to shake off all through life, that feeling I have spoken of before, of never having attained the degree of excellence others had expected of her.

When being severe with us young ones, sounding the degree of our ignorance or spotting any lapse in *our* education, she was in reality still continuing *Mamma's* education, still keeping a heavy hand over her former pupil, prolonging that atmosphere of pained reproof over the Grand Duchess's imperfections. Her appearance in our midst, in Russia or elsewhere, was as a trumpet call to order. During her "occupation" of the house (for no other word rightly expresses her attitude), everybody would be on their mettle, no lukewarmness was tolerated or even possible. Whilst she was there she used, so to say, to make you sit up, be on parade, at your Sunday best; no shilly-shallying when old Alexandrine Tolstoy was anywhere near.

But I believe that although in awe of her, Mamma loved her old governess very dearly; she was a strong link with the past, with the beloved home of yore. She too was a "chip of the old block," a remnant of the good old days; a veteran of the Old Guard. Inflexible, not to be mitigated, no half-perfections ever sufficed *her*. Her standards were high, Imperial standards, nor to please anybody would she budge an inch from any attitude she adopted.

Perfection was only that which *she* decreed as such; she overruled every argument, no other voice had any weight when she spoke. Enthroned on the best arm-chair in Mamma's drawing-room, dealing out wisdom to old and young, there was about her something of the Pope.

Always dressed in black, with a bow tied under her chins, so as to conceal their too great volume, she smoked innumerable cigarettes, whilst the fingers of her left hand kept twitching in the way I have described. She was also inordinately fond of her food, she too must certainly have had a "Russian digestion," and the cook, like all other inmates of the house, was kept at his highest level during her stay.

I think she had a heart of gold; she loved us dearly and I can still well recall the sensation of being buried, so to say, in her ample chins, whilst she clasped us in a grandmotherly embrace to her bosom.

Like most children we loved butterfly-hunting, and I remember her indignation when she saw us impaling our newly captured victims on the crown of our stiff straw hats. She declared that they were still alive, that she could see them turn round and round on their pins. She called us barbarians, which, if her accusation was true, we certainly were.

Old Countess Tolstoy lived to a very old age, which was just the sort of thing that she would do!

I shall return to Russia again later, once while still under the reign of Alexander III, and then to the court of Nicolas II, but to-day, so as to proceed with a certain amount of order, and according to the years, I must move on to Malta, the Paradise of our childhood.

CHAPTER V

MALTA

WE embarked for Malta from Marseilles in October 1886. Grand-mamma Queen had lent us for that voyage her yacht, *H.M.S. Osborne*, a beautiful boat, but not particularly steady in a heavy sea, and we had rough weather all the time, a three or four days' crossing, if I remember rightly, but what I remember distinctly is that nearly everybody was very sick!

Mamma, although she disliked the sea, was an excellent sailor. In those days I was sometimes very sick, but never prostrate; there were hours between the outbursts when I was perfectly well and happy. Ducky, my inseparable comrade, was, on the contrary, a hopeless sailor, whilst little Sandra was chirpy enough.

I do not remember much about sister Beatrice in those days, for she was the baby, and had a department all her own. To her three sisters, though she is now a mother of three big boys, she is "Baby" even to-day, and it is thus that we still call her.

My birthday was celebrated on the *Osborne*, the 29th of October, our arrival being fixed for next day. I was very proud to have a birthday on the sea, and without mishaps was able to get through a tea offered to me by the officers on that occasion. Otherwise I do not remember any special incident during that crossing, except the excitement of the waves washing over the decks. Curiously enough I cannot even remember who was in command of the yacht in those days. But what I *do* remember as though it were yesterday is our arrival at Malta. It is one of those pictures impressed upon my mind for all time—a wonderful picture, unforgettable, to be cherished to the end of my days.

It was at the hour of sunset that we steamed into the beautiful old fortified harbour of Valletta. A gorgeous pageant spread before our eyes. As background the mighty battlements partly hewn out of the rock itself, and at their feet the whole Mediterranean Fleet in festive array. In those days ships still had masts, which added to their beauty of line, and on the yards, one above the other, stood the blue-jackets in

long lines, cheering for all they were worth. All the bunting was out and as the *Osborne* advanced slowly down the double row of battleships, each separate band struck up "God Save the Queen."

The sky was burning red, as if on fire, and the water caught up its reflection as did the rocks on the harbour. Earth, heavens and sea were ablaze, a stupendous illumination Nature had arranged for this festive occasion, the arrival of four little girls with their mother at the enchanted island of Malta, where for three blessed years incredible days of delight were to be lived.

Sky and sea a glory of colour, the earth all aglow, music, flags, cheering and, when anchorage was reached, Papa waiting for us, Papa at the height of his career, at the height also of his good looks. Papa with his deeply tanned face in which his eyes shone extraordinarily, fascinatingly blue. A sailor in every sense of the word, a sailor, an Englishman, a prince!

On the quay, surrounded by his military household, flanked by a red-coated guard of honour, stood old Sir Lintorn Simmons, Governor of Malta, Viceroy of the island, sovereign in Her Majesty's stead.

Old Sir Lintorn was the typical Englishman dear to foreign imagination; red-faced, portly, with white whiskers, strapped into a tight scarlet uniform, crowned with cocked hat and white feathers, a cheerful, hearty gentleman with an optimistic outlook upon life.

A rapidly descending dusk had wiped the orange radiance out of sky, earth and sea, and it was in the gathering shadows of evening that, in solemn procession, we drove through the soldier-lined streets of Valletta. Up the winding fortified road leading from the harbour to the inner town, passing over the drawbridges, under the mighty porticoes, and then finally along Strada Reale, the capital's chief street. Then out again on the other side, over more drawbridges, under a second lot of porticoes—for Valletta is a fortified town—with cheering crowds all along the way, the balconies full of people, but night coming on so that everything was getting dim.

It was quite dark by the time we reached San Antonio, the Governor's summer palace which had been given over to us during our stay.

San Antonio, beloved house!

Oh, the incredible joy of awaking next morning in a new world!

Everything had been dream-like and indistinct the evening before, the long road from the town to the country house, the drive along the final avenue, the entry into the large walled-in court-yard, the stopping at the front door, the broad stairs, the huge stone-paved rooms. Night had been spread over all those first impressions, and added to that, the fatigue of the long journey, the excitement of the glorious reception. All the floors heaved under our feet; after those several days of rough sea we still seemed to be pacing decks that went up and down. Our heads were giddy, our eyes stiff from want of sleep.

But next day a veritable revelation, an awakening into a magic world. There was enchantment in all things. It was our first contact with the South, almost the East in fact, because Malta resembles the Holy Land more than anything else.

Our bedroom opened out on to a wee stone flight of stairs leading into the garden. Half-way down those stairs was a little flat roof on to which you could step. The first look down from that roof into the San Antonio gardens belongs to the "ecstasies" I can never forget.

A walled-in oasis, Eastern and secret-looking, a maze of trees, mostly of kinds quite unknown to me, and, running through it all, a criss-cross of glazed paths. Beyond the encircling walls, more trees, a world still to be discovered.

Here there were no tidy beds as in the gardens I had been accustomed to, but large pieces of ground divided only by paths, and in these, everything grew higgledy-piggledy, a lovely mass of colour saturating the whole place with exquisite fragrance. Over this medley of flowers hovered a thousand bees and butterflies, and there was a faint buzz in an air which seemed alive with a million wings.

There was jasmine, large-flowered and sweet-scented, and tree-high geraniums, verbena, roses and large clumps of feathery white chrysanthemums, tumbling in snowy cascades right over the paths, strewing them with a thousand petals; there were violets, narcissi, anemones, besides every sort of flower unknown to northern climes.

An enchanted world indeed. . . . Fairyland!

Hand in hand Ducky and I stood looking down upon all this, amazed, speechless. It was a revelation, its perfect beauty actually made tears of emotion well up in our eyes.

Slowly, almost reverently, we descended into this paradise, taking

possession of it by small degrees, wandering through its beauty as in a dream.

Oranges, yes, actually oranges! Not yet quite ripe, but there they hung under the shadow of their thick shiny leaves, small, round balls of future sweetness.

We discovered that it was a quite modest-looking white flower which saturated the whole air with such exquisite fragrance, there were bushes of it everywhere. I believe it is called mock-orange. And growing up against the high walls, whole quantities of magenta-coloured bougainvillæa, a stupendous sheet of colour, and quantities of roses; large, pale yellow, and many-leaved, they seemed to be laughing down upon us, aware that they were safe from our plundering hands.

Oh, the sweetness, the beauty, the enchantment! And still all those gardens beyond, beckoning to you from behind high walls. Stepping through small openings from one to another, you advanced into joy, and everywhere flowers, fragrance, sunshine, and the buzzing of a myriad wings. Unknown worlds to be discovered. Mystery. Shady groves and little canals of water running beneath dark evergreen branches, and what violets! Light blue double ones, larger than any we had ever seen, and others deeply purple, half hidden amongst their fragrant leaves. Oh, the joy, the joy, the joy!

Beyond the gardens was the large court-yard which we had dimly perceived last night on arriving. Pepper trees, somewhat resembling thin-leaved willows, grew against its exceedingly high walls, which on two sides had a promenade along the top. One of these separated the court-yard from the public gardens, which were large and beautiful and open to anyone who wanted to saunter through their shade.

Opposite that wall were the stables, a department which played a great part in our lives, for we were ardent horse-lovers and passionate riders, now entirely released from old Lumley's tutelage. Skitty and his glossy companions had already been installed before our arrival, also Tommy, who was now entirely Sandra's horse.

Another high wall, pierced by two wide arches, divided the big court from a smaller one before the front door. Here too there were those silvery pepper trees with their loose grapes of pale pink fruit, hanging in long clusters that each breath of wind tossed to and fro.

Everything was a surprise, a revelation. The house itself was enormous with spacious, stone-flagged rooms without end, and long covered galleries running out into promenades upon the top of the high walls, which separated the gardens from each other. The architecture was fascinating, well adapted to a hot climate, and we were always discovering new possibilities. The roofs, being flat and on several levels, were also an exciting ground for discovery, as you could walk all over them, climbing up and down and peeping into the different gardens beneath, having a bird's-eye view of San Antonio's topography. This was indeed a world all to itself, intricate, exciting, an endless source of interest.

Mamma's private boudoir was a long, deliciously cool room with a little stairway leading into one of the gardens, the smallest and the most shady of them all. A glazed path ran right through its centre and at the farther end was a tree unlike any I have even seen since. It was a thick-set, wide-spreading tree, something the shape of an oak, and its flowers bloomed an ardent orange before its leaves were green. These flame flowers were large and somewhat the shape of a giant salvia flower. When in full bloom it really seemed to be on fire, a beautiful sight! It had also this peculiarity, that when you shook its branches honey poured down upon you in showers.

In this garden Mamma had allowed the gardener to build a miniature grotto for each of us, in a sponge-like stone peculiar to the island. The Maltese had a special art of building these queer little grottoes which had somewhat the shape of an old-fashioned bee-hive, but more squat, and open in front. There was something indescribable about these ridiculous little grottoes, we considered them veritable works of art; besides, they were halls of shady mystery. According to our idea, we added to the mystery by placing a little earthenware dish of water in the centre of each. These represented enchanted pools and we had wee goldfish, the smallest that could be found, swimming about in these dishes.

My favourite fish, which was absurdly tiny and spotted red and black, I had pompously called Mephisto. Mephisto was a great pet and I loved him with a sort of ecstasy, weaving all sorts of stories around his frail existence. For a day or so Mephisto was happy enough in his little dish, but then he took to standing on his head, nose pointed downwards.

And thus would he remain with disconcerting persistency, having quite given up swimming about, till one morning I found him dead!

Poor little Mephisto, black and red and so short-lived. Child-like I managed to make quite a tragedy out of his untimely demise, for is not the death of a pet each time a deep tragedy to a child? How many of these tragedies have there not been all through my life? And nevertheless each new pet was received with the same enthusiasm and the same hope of eternity!

Thus did each of the San Antonio gardens have its special significance, its special charm, its special story, and there were five of them, without counting the public and the kitchen garden.

When I returned to Malta about forty years later, the son of the old gardener of yore showed me with great pride the Russian violets H.I.H. the Duchess of Edinburgh had planted during our stay at San Antonio the beloved.

My father and mother were very popular at Malta and San Antonio became the centre of hospitality.

Many guests went in and out of our house and we received a giant share of their attention. We made innumerable friends, mostly among the naval officers; the Fleet was, so to say, at our disposal, and we were continually visiting one ship or another, H.M.S. *Alexandra*, Papa's flagship, being our great favourite, her midshipmen becoming our particular chums.

But it was especially our rides and riding-parties that played the biggest part in our lives.

Mamma knew how to be severe and there was no pardon for certain misdeeds, but she also knew how to give us splendid liberty for harmless amusements.

She had resigned herself to what she called "our insane passion" for riding and each of us was allowed a horse.

Horses were all important in Malta, for this was, of course, long, long before the days of motoring, and nearly everybody in Malta possessed a horse. There was polo, and racing, and innumerable riding picnics to far parts of the island.

The horse peculiar to Malta was the Barbary Arab. You often saw real beauties harnessed to the simplest carts, spirited, blue-blooded little

creatures. The characteristic Maltese vehicle is a small, flat, two-wheeled carriage, with a mattress or carpet spread over it and no seats; the wheels are very high and the driver either sits or lies on this mattress, unless he is seated on the shafts when his cart is full. They drive at a great pace and take enormous pride in their horses and even in their harness.

The more civilized carriages were four-wheeled and four-seated and shaded by a white, fringed awning which shook backwards over your head according to the bumps of the road. These are drawn by a pair, whilst the go-cart is a one-horse vehicle.

The large carts, which are also two-wheeled, are painted bright scarlet with gay patterns all over them, and are exceedingly picturesque and colourful. Enormous mules are harnessed to these; the Maltese mules are the largest I have ever seen anywhere and are placid, patient, unemotional creatures, whilst the horses are small and fiery.

Mamma gave one of these Barbary Arabs to each of us elder sisters, whilst Sandra remained sole possessor of trustworthy Tommy, who exactly suited her size and temperament.

The first horses found for us were not a success, for they were tricky or unreliable or had other defects. One was a grey called Gordon who had a nasty way of trying to crush your legs against the high stone walls that border every Maltese road. There is no road in Malta that is not bordered by walls.

We were of course in ecstasies over each horse brought to us, but after having had a few failures, Robert the coachman found an adorable, high-spirited chestnut which became my own special mount. His mane and tail were cream-coloured, he had a wicked eye and his legs, though spindle-like, were hard as iron. He could be something of a beast, being a stallion, but I loved him with a jealous passion and called him Ruby.

Life at Malta was marvellous, but Malta with Ruby *en plus* became Paradise; Ruby was the culminating enchantment of that blessed isle.

Ducky, after having first possessed a grey called Stuart, and a lovely but unsound golden chestnut called Scout, was given a handsome bay which she christened Fearless. Ruby and Fearless became the centre of our lives, and our love for them was ecstasy to ourselves, but often an irritation to those who considered our passion exaggerated. It was diffi-

cult to keep us out of the stables and we were often found elbow deep in bran mash, helping the stable people mix this delicious mess for our favourites. The groom, who accompanied us on all our adventures, had the cheerful name of Hobbs, which was entirely in keeping with his round, rosy face. Hobbs was always smiling, he never discouraged us and was never indignant at our pranks.

Our ideas about riding were anything but civilized. We were entirely fearless and our chief pace was full gallop, quite regardless of the ground. The only soft ground in Malta was the race-course called the Massa, where we went almost daily except Saturdays, which were picnic days.

These wiry little Arabs had legs of steel, and I never remember Ruby having had anything the matter with him except once when I rode him through a pool of lime, entirely unconscious of the hellish qualities of that deliciously white mud.

We had, alas! a predilection for mud in those days. It seldom rained at Malta, but when it did it was in deluges and the Massa turned into a lake of mire. I am sorry to say that this was the moment when we liked it best. Truly horrible riding-competitions were then organized on the race-course with our young midshipmen friends, not excluding a few more advanced in rank but foolish enough to enjoy our mad pranks, in which Hobbs the cheerful also took part. The object was to tear madly through the muddy pools, seeing who could splash the other most. The result may easily be imagined! We were one and all unrecognizable after one turn! Luckily, as before mentioned, it rained very rarely in Malta.

We were wild girls, but entirely harmless; our amusements were most innocent even if they occasionally included mud, and Mamma was wise in that she let us, within certain limits, of course, enjoy ourselves as we would. There was a glorious and blessed freedom about that Malta life, a freedom which had to do with the sunshine and the general good-humour of the people, young and happy, and who had no *Hintergedanken*.

But one can never remain quite undisturbed even in Paradise, and soon a voice was raised in protest against the too great freedom our mother allowed us. How could we be permitted to ride alone on the race-course in the company of a dozen young men? This voice was

that of an elder lady of the family, one who, alas! "saw through a glass darkly"—and who, not being harmless herself, was unable to recognize harmlessness in others, nor did she care what heartburn she caused.

Mamma disagreed with her point of view, but her voice was too loud to be ignored and Mamma felt obliged henceforth to send her daughters out in the company of their governess. This was a dreary arrangement for both parties. Mademoiselle could not ride (that at least was a mercy) and the Massa was both shadeless and hot. Nevertheless she had to inflict her unwelcome company upon us, bumping backwards and forwards after us to the Massa in a local carriage, and installing herself as best she could under a red cotton parasol somewhere, whence she could oversee our movements if not the expression of our faces or our conversation.

I cannot say that these interested her overmuch; hunched up under her scarlet protection which, we declared, made our horses shy, she would soon be deeply absorbed in her book, becoming oblivious of all else. We only regretted that she sat too far away for us to be able to splash the offending parasol as we galloped past! But it was against the lady from England that we most greatly raged, against that voice so jarringly raised in our Garden of Eden. It was an attitude worthy of old Alexandrine Tolstoy herself.

As may have been observed, our lessons did not weigh heavily in the plan of our lives, though there were certain hours of study which, according to us, disagreeably interrupted our freedom.

The first year it was Mademoiselle who was the schoolroom Cerberus, who had to see to this less pleasant side of life. She herself gave us lessons, but the second year, owing to ill-health, and a want of loyalty towards our mother, she was replaced by a German lady, much younger and of good family, seemingly very charming, but who later played a none too happy part in our lives. She, alas! became *too* great a favourite with Mamma who, in this case, unfortunately misplaced her trust.

But there was a glorious interregnum when the old authority was at an end and the new one was not yet installed, and this was a period of bliss which Ducky and I arranged entirely to our convenience.

One delightful figure of those schoolroom days must be mentioned:



WE THREE SISTERS ON HORSEBACK



PAPA IN HIS OLD RUSSIAN COSTUME

our music-mistress, Miss Butler, who came three times a week to give us lessons.

Miss Butler, though of English origin as her name proves, had with the years almost become a Maltese, and her dress was in accordance with a very southern conception of elegance. Bright colours and plumes played a great part in her attire. She was portly and indulgent and her very much "be-bustled" Sunday best was a mustard-tinted plush with pink ostrich feathers, and as there was a good deal of her, this attire was startling, to say the least. She was also a good Catholic, which was disagreeably evident on Fridays because of the atmosphere of garlic emanating from her whole person.

Garlic was, in fact, the only shady side of Malta the beloved, and a Maltese crowd nearly asphyxiated you with its fumes.

Miss Butler was too indulgent and too fond of us to be an efficient instructor to a trio of unruly children not overblessed with musical aptitude. Like a dear old lady called Mrs. Duget who came to Birkhall in Scotland to give us music lessons, I think her efforts were crowned with no particularly artistic results, but we kept in touch with both till we were all three married and mothers of a family.

I have no remembrance of anyone controlling the progress we made, so we limped through these lessons in the official drawing-room—whose wide glass door opened out upon gardens that were calling us all the time.

Dear old Miss Butler, she was a real friend even if she did not make a Paderewski or Rubinstein out of any of us!

Ducky and I, the two strong-minded elders, entirely over-ruled sister Sandra, who was seldom allowed a say in any matter, and we so arranged our studies that she was installed at her music during the hours when we two particularly desired to be free. Happy-go-lucky days when the Malta sunshine made all mankind indulgent and we were able, during a blessed interregnum, to arrange our lessons to suit our desires.

The lady from England alone struck her discordant note, but it was not strong nor important enough to mar the household's harmony.

Mademoiselle was *frileuse*, as she herself expressed it, and this was one of her chief disagreements with Mamma. Mamma, being plump

and warm-blooded, loved fresh air and open windows, whilst Mademoiselle was skinny, bloodless and always shivering.

Papa belonged to the period when the English and the French had not yet made the Entente Cordiale, and he thoroughly objected to poor Mademoiselle who, it must be said, had little with which to charm the stronger sex.

An amusing little incident can be fitted in here.

The Governor, Sir Lintorn Simmons, was giving a costume ball at the Governor's Palace of Valletta. There was great excitement all over the island, everybody was going to the Governor's ball, even Mademoiselle was invited.

"Mademoiselle, quelle costume mettez-vous?"

"Ah, mes enfants, c'est un grand secret!"

"Oh, Mademoiselle, dites, dites!"

"Non, non, mes enfants, ce sera une surprise, une belle surprise. Je puis seulement vous dire que je serai une dame très importante."

And therewith we had to rest content, though there was much speculation as to what sort of costume would suit gaunt Mademoiselle.

The great evening came at last and we children gathered together in the hall with gaping and excited servants peeping through every available door to catch sight of the costumes.

Papa was resplendent in an old Russian costume he had once worn at St. Petersburg. Sapphire blue, trimmed with Mamma's darkest sable, with cap to match, he had a double-headed golden eagle embroidered on his breast. Even his gauntlet gloves were richly embroidered with gold and he wore a jewelled belt.

Mamma, who never liked dressing up, was *simplement poudrée*, but her great friend, Lady Mary Fitzwilliam, an attractive Irishwoman whose hair was already prematurely grey and who wore it short in days when this was most unusual, appeared in a crinolined, dove-coloured taffeta Louis XVI dress, deliciously in keeping with her type.

But Mademoiselle, where was she?

Ah, here she comes!

Oh, goodness! Imagine bony, gaunt, bespectacled Mademoiselle in a skimpy little frock showing much too much of her skinny legs, a frock striped red, white and blue, representing the French flag and, of all things, the "Phrygian bonnet" on her head!

It was a ghastly moment, no one knew what to say.

Papa frowned, his displeasure was evident, one could actually see the thoughts passing through his mind, for Papa roused was never able to contain his ire or mask his displeasure.

Mademoiselle, become suddenly skittish, perhaps because of her unusually short skirts, whisked about showing herself off:

"Mais, Mademoiselle, vous avez dit que vous seriez une dame très importante!"—we were aghast.

"Eh bien, mes enfants, je suis le drapeau français, je suis la France! en bas les chapeaux!"

Papa's frowns were becoming thunder-clouds, but Mamma, tickled by the humour of the situation, cleared the atmosphere by complimenting Mademoiselle upon the originality of her idea, "si nouvelle, si symbolique, si patriotique," and bundling Papa off before the storm could burst, we were left alone to express our disappointment. What a sell! An important lady indeed! We had had visions of Mary Queen of Scots, of Boadicea, Cleopatra, la Reine Isabeau, Charlotte Corday, the Queen of Hearts and what not, but *le drapeau français*.

What a come-down! And how thin her legs were and her "specs" under that absurd, unbecoming cap! Really it did not suit her at all. Thoroughly disgusted, we were finally driven off to our beds.

Just now, in describing the different costumes, I mentioned Lady Mary Fitzwilliam. She was my mother's dearest friend and remained so to the end of her life, being one of the few who outlived Mamma.

She was an Irishwoman of the Butler family and had all the wit and vivacity of her race, also something of their instinctive antagonism to all things too truly British. Without being a beauty she was full of charm, very clever, a delightful companion, amusing, gay, well-read, and for ever on the go, although her health was poor. Men were attracted by her, and she had always an adorer or two sighing at her heels: they were generally the men we children did not care about—the intellectuals, *les beaux parleurs*, *les grands mondains*, those who had in them a touch of cynicism in their make-up. She dressed in an original way, harmoniously in keeping with her "marquise" type. Her short grey hair was her outstanding originality. Mamma often used her as lady-in-waiting, though she never officially occupied that position.

Mademoiselle detested Lady Mary, declaring that she had a too great influence over our mother and not a good one at that. She loathed her success, her affectations, her originalities, and these were always expounded to us in the schoolroom in a way which was not at all in keeping with the Christian principles she endeavoured to instil into us. She had, in fact, an ugly way of poisoning our minds against Mamma's great friend, making her appear in our eyes as a grasping woman sponging upon our mother's bounties and misusing her kindness. I am certain that this was a most unfair appreciation of the vivacious, entertaining lady, but she managed to sow a seed of mistrust in our hearts.

Lady Mary had a worthy but dull and rather deaf husband who was generally left at home, and three sweet little daughters; Mab, Elsie and Ena, one for each of us sisters, and almost exactly our age.

Mab was a real beauty. Elsie was thin and lanky with over-large, very dark eyes. Ena was a chubby infant, fair, blue-eyed and slow. Lady Mary and her three daughters had the peculiarity of not being able to pronounce an "r" which was replaced by a "v" or "w." Everything was "vevy nice" or "vewy funny" or "vidiculous, weally vevy vidiculous."

Lady Mary's daughters were invited to spend a winter with us at San Antonio, and high times we had together!

Our friends were more delicate than we, who were as robust as little savages, but like all English children, they were good sports, and loved out-door exercise and our games together were wild and full of fun.

Ducky and I had a great predilection for climbing trees. No tree was too high, nor too difficult, we scaled them all, taking possession of their most unreachable branches whence we seemed to dominate the whole world, and to look down upon all common mortals beneath.

We had invented a game which was an endless source of amusement; Mab and Elsie were our monkeys, exotic animals we had acquired at some Eastern market and the climbing-competitions between masters and pets were splendid occasions to measure our skill.

The delight of sitting enthroned upon the very crown of the highest tree, well out of reach and beyond the grip of authority, was indeed a sensation of most regal freedom.

Our monkeys were obedient, which added greatly to that glorious feeling of being masters of the world. We had also made humbler

homes out of certain orange trees and here we did our so-called "cooking." Amongst other things we had obtained some old sachets belonging to Mamma. These were emptied into wee earthenware pots, most exquisite little Maltese peasant pots, round, rough and crooked. Mixed with water this sachet powder made a most appetizing paste and the pots were then fixed between convenient branches and the paste left to dry. For some reason it turned a very attractive old mauve colour, but finally, to our great disappointment, became sour and mildewed and would not lend itself to being kept as long as we desired.

There was a funny, flat-roofed little tool-house in that rather remote part of the garden, beside which a giant castor-oil plant grew. We used to take possession of this roof, and the castor-oil seeds, which were snow-white, were the basis of most of our pseudo-feasts. They grew in groups of coral pink husks rather resembling those of sweet chestnuts. The castor-oil plant is most decorative and has large, star-like leaves which are often beautiful and marked with red. These were our plates and our chief guest was an adorable little lizard with broad, tyre-like toes, who would come zigzagging down the hot walls of the tool-house when I whistled him an invitation. I believe that these broad-toed lizards are correctly called geckos. This one was really tame and actually *did* respond to music as his kind are supposed to do. But one day, to my horror, when I was trying to catch my little reptile friend, part of his tail remained between my fingers, which also confirms the legend about their tails coming off. But although the little gecko had lost his tail, he continued coming when whistled for and was often a timid witness of our castor-oil feasts.

Blessed days when everything was joy and all things possible, though so strangely full of mystery and undiscovered possibilities!

Saturday was *the* picnic day and great riding-parties were organized to some distant corner of the island. St. Paul's Bay, Verdala, the Inquisitor's Palace and to other places the names of which I have, alas! forgotten. Mamma would follow in a carriage with one or the other of her friends.

The start for these picnics was exciting to a degree, and full of clatter and noise. Our horses were fresh, prancing, ready to be off, difficult to hold. We, in our fearlessness, which amounted to unconsciousness

of any cause for fear, enjoyed their pranks which would have horrified old Lumley and all orthodox riders, and our first gallop, which was always down the walled-in avenue by the court-yard, was a most unruly proceeding. We were more like a troop of swooping Red Indians than civilized little girls. Our horses being stallions were all too ready with their teeth, and would often get a good grip of each other's tails, and thus, one behind the other, we would dash down that hard avenue, shrieking with laughter, our naval friends pounding after us whilst our horses were doing their best to buck us off. Our friends had horses as unruly as ours, although most of them rode with more science and decorum. We never realized that ours was a rather wild way of riding. We just let our spirits get the better of us, our companions encouraging our foolhardiness, but luckily there is a god who looks after the innocent.

Amongst our group of very young naval friends there was a certain Lieutenant Allenby, a round-faced youth, all smiles, good-humour and recklessness. Though his years counted more than ours, he was not a day older than we as to tastes and habits; there was plenty of health in him, but little wisdom. When Allenby was one of the party it was sure to be a day of adventure, frolic and merrymaking, a day also of anxiety for the elders. He was allowed "in small doses" only, because our association was not *de tout repos*.

I remember how one day, after a series of more than usually wild pranks, his horse and mine both took their bits between their teeth and ran away, this on the high road, if you please! For awhile we kept alongside of each other, but after a time it was either he or I leading, and each time we came abreast of each other, both would call out: "Can't you stop your horse?" "No, I can't!" and again one or the other would shoot on ahead. It was a perilous and exhausting race, coming to an end only when our horses themselves gave up for want of breath. I cannot say that this experience did not give me a bit of a fright!

We called Allenby "Full Moon" because of the excessive roundness of his cheerful countenance.

Among our special friends there was also Colin Keppel, Cecil Colville, Anson, Streatfield, Eric Back, Rumbold and David Beatty, these last four at that time midshipmen in the *Alexandra*. Beatty was my



A PICNIC AT ONE OF THE MALTA FORTS: MY MOTHER, CAPTAIN BOURKE, COLONEL SLADE, MY SISTERS AND I

*Stables
Maurice A. Bourke
Surprise 1889*



"CAPTAIN DEAR"—OUR GREAT FRIEND MAURICE A. BOURKE, R.N.

special friend and was already in those days a splendid rider and good polo-player. He has said since that I brought him luck.

Colin Keppel was our father's flag lieutenant. He was as wax in our hands, but was considered a safe companion and we were mostly entrusted to his care. He was as faithful as a dog and we entirely approved of him. Colville was always full of fun but a little supercilious. The most serious and steady was Anson, too serious in fact, so that he was dubbed "Old Anson" with a touch of pity in the epithet. The rides with "Old Anson" were just the opposite of those taken in Allenby's company and were considered somewhat in the light of correction.

Colin Keppel once had a most uncomfortable ride on a horse from our stables called Zulu, who ran away and did all sorts of other uncomfortable things. Colin lost his hat, and tore his clothes, but took it all in perfect good-humour whilst we little savages considered it roaring fun and laughed till we almost fell off our saddles.

Young Midshipman Rumbold was a good musician, but in those days we were quite unworthy of good music, and I remember how we hooted at him when he proposed to play classical music to us. No classical music for us! We always insisted on a certain Turkish March that had taken our fancy on account of its cheerfulness. I am afraid that we martyred poor Rumbold with that trashy Turkish March.

Amongst the army officers there was a certain Colonel Slade who was a friend of ours. He was, however, already a more serious acquaintance and was married. He had a beautiful horse called Tulba which we adored, and which he later took with him to England where we saw it again at Hampton Court where the Colonel was then living.

But the greatest of all our friends, so to say our hero, was Maurice Bourke, at that time commander of our father's yacht H.M.S. *Surprise*; Captain Bourke must have a page all to himself!

Captain Bourke! How we loved him! He had every quality needed to make him the ideal of three little girls with high spirits and a desire for hero-worship.

First of all he was Irish in the best sense of the word, dark, with blue eyes, gay, humorous, witty, with a delicious smile over extraordinarily white teeth, a smile that had something delightfully crooked about it and that at the same time seemed to draw his eyebrows right up under

his raven-black hair. His hair had a wave in it that any woman might have envied. He was as sunburnt as our father and his eyes just as startlingly blue. Blue eyes in a sailor's sunburnt face have something specially luminous about them, like lakes when the sun shines on them.

A broad-minded, warm-hearted, genial gentleman was Maurice Bourke, with a humorous way of seeing the good in his neighbour and of excusing the bad. Generous, amusing, he allowed each man his due, and knew how to plead for a culprit; besides, who could resist that crooked, white-toothed smile of his?

For us Captain Bourke had extraordinary "prestige," he was able to arouse in us complete and undiscussed allegiance. I for one, to quote a poet's undying words, loved him "with the passion put to use in my old griefs and with my childhood's faith."

We would have gone through fire and water for him. He could make us listen, obey and submit as no one else could. His word was magic. All revolts could be appeased by Captain Bourke; he could make us yield to any rule, and accept even those things we most violently opposed.

I remember a tragi-comic scene when Captain Bourke was sent to us because we had revolted against our skirts being lengthened! We smelt danger, a trap! We did not want to grow up, life was too exquisite as it was, we feared any change, anything that might curtail our glorious liberty and independence. We had a subconscious knowledge that there could be no going back. Lengthening skirts was a sign of certain restrictions to our wild ways, it had something to do with the clipping of wings and the putting on of chains, and we were prepared to oppose this innovation with all the strength of our wills, which could become steel when rebellion rose within us.

Mamma, who was at her wits' end, sent our beloved "Captain" to bring us to reason. This was indeed a wily move, no deputy could have been better chosen. I cannot remember what argument Maurice Bourke used, or in what way he beguiled us to submission, but he did carry the day and from then onwards we wore our dresses the few inches longer considered in keeping with the growth of our limbs.

Each time there was rebellion in the air, Maurice Bourke was the one deputed to talk reason to us, and such was our love for him that he could obtain from us the most difficult concessions.

Whenever he was away, Captain Bourke would write long and amusing letters which we faithfully answered, and in this way a very regular correspondence was kept up, a correspondence which did not cease till his death many years later, but much too early for those who loved him.

There is a peculiar charm about old letters. They conjure up the past as nothing else ; so I think that it would not be amiss here to insert these old missives. Three are from our dear Captain, long, amusing and, I may say, interesting letters in his best chatty style, and one is from my mother.

H.M.S. *Surprise* was the yacht put at the disposal of the Commander-in-Chief. My mother often followed the cruises my father made with his fleet. Thus she saw many interesting places. I have chosen a letter in which she describes a visit to Montenegro. She was an excellent letter-writer, and I am sure that this picture of those regions which have now changed hands will be interesting to anyone who reads it. All this, as can be seen by the dates on the letters, was a very long time ago.

TENEDOS.

Monday, September 3rd, 1887.

MY DEAR PRINCESS MARIE,

After all, while I was at Constantinople, I had not time to write to you of all our doings, as, will you believe, we were hardly left alone for five minutes. We got up quite safely in the *Surprise* with a tremendous large party on board, for we not only gave passages to many who wanted to see Constantinople but also a team of cricketers who went up to play the English community.

Directly on arrival we had all the swell Turks alongside to welcome the Duke, and then the Duke, myself, and Keppel and four or five officers, all in full dress, went up to the Yildiz Palace where the Sultan came to the door to receive the Duke and conducted him to a small room where they sat. The Sultan understands French very fairly but will not speak so all is carried on through an interpreter. Most of the Court officials speak French or English so there is not much difficulty. The Sultan presented all the Turkish swells to the Duke and we were all presented to the Sultan who shook hands. That night there was a full-dress dinner and again all the Cabinet Ministers and high Court officials. I sat between a fat Chief of the Police and the Director of Public Instruction. The former could speak nothing but Turkish so he was no good, and the latter spoke English but he smelt so nasty that I was nearly ill. He also had a very unwholesome appearance.

However, we managed to get on somehow, I confining myself to the weather and he giving forth odoriferous platitudes. I hope I shan't shock you with this description of my neighbour, but he made a great impression on me.

Well, as we had left the Fleet at three o'clock that morning, and I had been on my legs ever since and it was now 11.30 p.m., I was very glad when the audience after dinner was over and we went to bed. "We" means H.R.H., Mr. Keppel and myself. The Duke had proposed living on board the *Surprise*, but the Sultan would not hear of it, so the Duke kindly took Keppel and myself with him. We lived close to the Palace in a smaller house called the Yildiz Kiosk. It was on the whole very comfortable except that my bed was so short that I had to sleep corner-ways with my head in one corner and my feet at the opposite angle. However, I slept like a top. This was all on Wednesday. On Thursday for our sins we had to do a regatta. In the morning we went to the bazaars but there was no fun poking about because we could not, for notwithstanding all the Duke's requests, we were followed by two A.D.C.s in full dress, a guard of soldiers and four men with big sticks to belabour the crowd. A crowd you can well imagine, and we were followed *en masse* by Jews, Turks, Heretics, and all sorts, of all ages, sex and sizes. Buying, of course, was hopeless and though I saw nothing worth buying it would have been impossible as the prices of course at once became prohibitive. We had not much time to spare as we had to get on board the Sultan's yacht to go to Prinkipo Islands where this regatta was to take place.

We left at 11.30 and sat down to a very good luncheon. The yacht is a paddle yacht and fitted, I should say, as much or more for appearances than comfort. However, the luncheon was good. We of course could not go ten miles in a Turkish ship without something of a disaster happening, so all at once, when about half-way to our destination, with many grunts, squeaks and bumps the whole show came to a dead stop. It afterwards transpired, when all was put right, that they had forgotten to oil the engines, so naturally the engines got hot and they had to stop. As all regattas are mostly stupid I must include this one amongst the "mostly," except, I think, that I ought to put it in the superlative. For four solid hours were we refreshed by the sight of bobbing and struggling humanity in whose personality we could have no sort of interest. We were landed part of the time where the Duke was pounced upon by a proud regatta committee, and I think even looking at the races was better than having to make conversation with the natives of the islands who were doing the honours. We were regaled with drink and food in one, consisting of pineapple and strawberries in champagne. Very nasty, especially as the pineapple came out of a tin pot and the strawberries were much crushed, and oooh! from having been transported roughly in probably a dirty basket. Well, I must say this does sound a cheerful afternoon's amusement.

Well, the old Turkish yacht took us back and we dined in our own kiosk, and after dinner the Sultan sent to say that in his little bijou theatre, which is joined on to the palace, he expected us to come and see conjuring, if you please. The Sultan was there himself and the little theatre very nice, but conjuring, unless very good, palls rather after two hours. However, the man is the Sultan's own conjurer. He is a Frenchman and I may say I learned more about conjuring in that two hours than I ever did before. We were in a gallery well above him so that it was not quite fair, and I saw nearly everything he did. And so bedtime came round again.

Friday is the Turkish Sunday and so a great day in Constantinople. The Sultan goes to the Mosque in state at noon. This we saw very well. All the troops assembled, lining the roads, and with the great officers of state and distinguished officials marching in front of the Sultan's carriage at a foot pace, he passed by to the Mosque which is close to the palace. As he goes by all the troops present arms and they call out as he passes "Padishah chok yasha," which means "Long live the Sultan." After praying for about half an hour he drove himself back in a little pony-carriage and sitting in a window of the palace received the salutes of the troops as they marched past. We saw about eight thousand go by and although not smartly dressed they are undoubtedly most workmanlike and with good officers are capable of almost anything. They are much improved, both officers and men, as for some years many German officers have been in the employ of the Sultan and have done much for the improvement of smartness and appearance.

After this the Duke went to the Sultan and presented his congratulations on the anniversary of his accession—twelve years on the throne. Curiously enough it was the anniversary of the Duke being thirty years in the Navy, so mutual congratulations passed and after the Sultan came to myself and Keppel, shook hands and spoke to us, a thing he seldom does. I, through an interpreter, thanked His Majesty for his kindness and hospitality and also congratulated him. He is an insignificant little man, very Jew-like, with a long nose and perfectly hideous. That night we saw some very fine illuminations and dined at the Embassy at Therapia about ten miles up the Bosphorus. An awfully long dinner and a huge reception of all the Constantinople beauty and fashion. Fashion, yes, but very little beauty. Madame Nelidoff, the Russian Ambassador's wife, is a perfect nightmare and is, I think, one of the ugliest women I have ever seen. On Saturday we were to have been treated to a garden party at which the Duke was to do the honours and also another full-dress dinner at the Sultan's palace, but unfortunately for us (not for him, poor chap), one of the first cousins of the Sultan took it into his head to die and so we escaped.

I saw the Treasury, which is a marvellous place and contains some most extraordinary jewels, but like all Turkish things it is very badly arranged and there is so little light it is hard to see anything. I also went to the Dolma Batché palace where there are wonderful rooms. There is one in the

centre called the throne room which is quite marvellous. Next week they expect the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess Serge and the Grand Duke Paul and they will live in this palace. It is very fine and all the outside of marble.

The cricketers won their match and altogether the cruise was most successful. The Sultan insisted on decorating us all and gave numerous presents, sent tobacco, cigarettes, sheep, bullocks and vegetables for the ship. I was given a beautiful gold and diamond cigarette-case which I will show you when you come.

I am so looking forward to next month when the *Surprise* will again, I hope, be your home for a day or two.

Now good-bye as we are just off to Lemnos and other regions of no letters either out or in. Give my love to the princesses and especially to Princess Sandra for her tenth birthday.

Yours very sincerely,
MAURICE A. BOURKE.

CETTINJE, MONTENEGRO.
October 3rd, 1887.

MY DARLINGS,

Here we are in Montenegro and this curious country is so unlike anything else that I think myself in a dream. But I must tell you what we did after Zara. The night before we left that place, we had a ball at the Governor's. I did not dance, as I knew nobody, but had to talk to some ladies who only spoke Italian. We left after an endless supper and next day started very early for Spalato and separated from the squadron, which came on straight to Cattaro. We had the idea of stopping at another pretty place before Spalato, called Trau, and spent the night at anchor there. We saw a very interesting and fine old church there and a most curious small town. In the evening came a frightful thunderstorm, to which we are getting quite accustomed, though they make a terrific row.

Now Mrs. Monson reads to Captain Bourke and myself when we have free time and he sticks in all the things in the scrap-book of our cruises. It is getting quite interesting and Captain Bourke does it beautifully. Photographs, menus, invitations, newspapers, sketches, all go in and our kind Captain is so pleased to have this occupation in his free hours. He is a wonderfully practical and kind man, thinks of everything and makes our life very comfortable and pleasant. At Spalato we saw the most interesting remains of Diocletian's palace, into the middle of which is built the town. The cathedral is an ancient Roman temple. In the afternoon we went to see the remains of the old town of Salona which are just being excavated, but it began to pour with rain and before we got home we were almost drenched. When we had to cross from the shore to the ship there was such a down-pour that we could hardly distinguish the *Surprise* and got on board at last all dripping.

The weather being so bad, we decided to start only next morning. It was blowing hard then, but as we had to travel the whole time between the islands, we did not feel it and anchored again at night in a small bay, to arrive at Cattaro next morning and not in the dark. I got up before six, to be ready before we began to toss about, and we had a few nasty hours before we got in to the wonderful Bay of Cattaro. It is exactly like a big lake surrounded by immense mountains. We took an hour and a half before we reached the end of it where the small town of Cattaro is situated. We found there the whole squadron. Next day, Saturday, we went to a picnic given by the officers of the *Alexandra* on the shores, in a small bay. It was great fun, they had all sorts of games, races, jumping through the water and got all very hot and dirty. Some even played various instruments and were like a lot of children.

Yesterday morning we started from Cattaro at eight and had a magnificent drive of six hours over the mountains. You never saw such a splendid view and such a magnificent road. George¹ went with us and we had besides Mrs. Monson, Captain Bourke and Mr. Keppel. Unfortunately we got into a mist and could not see the marvellous view from the very top. At the Montenegro frontier the Prince met us and we were very pleased to see him, as he is a very old friend and such an amiable man. He had prepared a luncheon in a small house belonging to him and we were very hungry after the long drive. The Prince himself and every man in the country wears the beautiful national dress. They are such handsome men, even the common peasants, and so very friendly and respectful. They all have excellent manners, come running to the road to make their bow and the Prince is like a real father amongst them all. But curious enough it seems to us hardly ever to meet a woman in the streets. They are very modest and stay at home, but the men walk about and in the evening dance a very curious war dance, much wilder than the Scotch reel. They sing to it some wild song which sounds so curious in the stillness of the night.

Before we reached the town of Cetinje, we were met by the Prince's eldest son, a very pretty boy aged sixteen, very tall and dark, with most excellent manners and such a bright, clever look. He was on horseback at the head of a cavalry escort, all mounted on very small, strong ponies. They cantered round us, some racing wildly along, over stones and rough ground. At the house we were met by the Princess and her daughters, all in national dress. I used to know the two young ladies when they were in Russia, but now they are quite grown up and such nice, lively girls. They amuse George very much and he is great friends with them. They laugh and talk and he gets on in French and does not mind it. There is also a dear little boy of eight years, dressed in lovely costumes; he comes in, making beautiful bows, and kisses one's hand. He is called Mirko and his

¹ King George V.

father simply adores him but does not spoil any of them. In fact he is very strict and everybody obeys him in a wonderful way and is devoted to him. Only imagine that they all walk about with loaded revolvers, even all the servants when they wait at dinner.

On the Tuesday we went on an expedition to the lake of Scutari and it was lovely scenery. We first went by road, then down a river in a small steamer and into the lake, with grand mountain scenery. The Prince is building a small house on a peninsula, and we had to land on the rocks and go up a steep hill, which I did not like much in the heat, but the good people pull one up with such energy that one has to get on without stopping. We had lunch out of doors. On the way back the Prince killed a very poisonous snake that was going to get up on its tail. We returned to Cattaro yesterday for luncheon with the Prince and his son and they visited most of the ships; then Papa gave a big dinner on the *Alexandra* and they left this morning.

I was so pleased to get news twice from you here. I hope Sandra has been to the dentist, as she ought soon to take off her plate. Arrange a nice birthday for Alfred. But how sad to be far away on mine! I send you all many kisses.

Your old
MAMMA.

I am so pleased Mademoiselle liked her presents.

ROYAL PALACE,
MADRID.

Sunday, June 17th, 1888.

DEAR PRINCESS MARIE,

It was so nice of you to write to me so soon and I am very glad you liked getting my letter. I hope the nougat did not taste of matches. Now I must give you some details of Madrid. The Queen was not at all well when we first arrived last Tuesday but it was only a little fever from the great heat she found at Valencia after she left Barcelona, and by Thursday she was well again. We have all been working so hard whilst we were here. There is the Infanta Isabel who is sister of the late King, and lives in the palace. She is very nice and kind but is so strong and *never* gets tired. The result you may easily imagine for one would hardly think it was possible to see so much in such a very short time. You know how strong the Duchess is and how impossible it is to tire her. I think the Infanta must have heard of this and it seemed to be a trial which should be worn out first, but I can tell you it was more than the Infanta could do to tire your Mamma. Now I will give you just short accounts of our different days.

We left Alicante on Monday afternoon, having arrived there in the morning from Malaga. The party consisted of the Duke and Duchess, Prince George,¹ Lady Mary, Mr. Keppel and myself. There were two

¹ King George V.

very comfortable saloon carriages put on to the train and the Duchess and Lady Mary went in one and the remainder of the party in the other carriage. We took the picnic tea-basket as well as some meat and strong drinks for later on. And we had *Nics* in the train. We stopped at a little station called La Encina at about 6.30 where in as many minutes we had five hot dishes with bread and cheese stuffed down our throats. I could not manage this meal, which consisted of tough meat and heaps of garlic in five different forms. So I left my portions on my plate and I dare say somebody else ate them after instead. I am sure I wish them joy for I expect he or she must have smelt horrid for a week, but I must get on for the train is just starting for Madrid and it would be a bore to be left behind. By the by, at about ten o'clock Horton the footman was wanted to get some hot water for the Duchess but he could nowhere be found. My servant knew that he had got out of the train but did not get in again. It seems really that he got into another carriage but we thought he had been left behind. However, when he turned up again the general impression was that he had missed the train but that as it went so slow he was able to run after it and catch it up. So much for Horton. We arrived in Madrid at 8.45 and were received by Swells and Guards. The Infanta Isabel was at the station as well. We had to dress in the train—of course no bath, and all out of a very small basin with very little water, which was quite black when it was finished with. However, with the help of our best clothes we managed to look pretty decent about the face and hands.

Tuesday afternoon was spent at the museum of pictures. Talk about a collection! It is the most marvellous thing in the world. There are over two thousand pictures in the gallery and comparatively speaking hardly any trash. The Velazquez collection is, of course, unrivalled anywhere, for Philip IV of Spain made him paint almost entirely and solely for him. In fact he used to live in the Palace and was made a member of the King's household. We were only two or three hours there and, of course, were only able to see the best properly. So on Tuesday night we went to bed early to prepare for Toledo next day.

We left Madrid at ten in a special train with the Royal saloon carriages. We had a capital breakfast in the train and arrived at Toledo at noon. There we found two carriages, each with four mules with beautiful harness all covered over with little woollen balls and bells, and away we went. You can't think how well the mules go along; directly they come to a hill away they go full gallop. Amongst other wonderful sights and relics of the ancient Moors I must mention the Toledo arms factory, and the church, built in the most perfect and purely Gothic style by Ferdinand and Isabella, who, as you know, were the King and Queen who conquered Granada, the last stronghold of the Moors in Spain. At the arms factory, which has been celebrated for the excellence of its steel sword blades and daggers for many centuries, we saw all the different departments in full working order and the men

carving the blades and inlaying the steel with gold and silver. We were all given specimens. I got a very fine large knife, which will be excellent for a hunting knife should occasion offer and it is made sharp. The Duchess has many very pretty little inlaid things which you will see when she gets to Coburg.

The Duke's A.D.C. here is the Marquis de Sierra Bullones who was in England at the time of the Queen's Jubilee and attached to the suite of the Infanta Eulalie. This good man insisted on presenting the Duke with a sword which he admired. It is a copy of the sword of Don Fernan de Gonzales de Cordova, called and known as "El Gran Capitan." He was a very great general at the conquest of Granada. After this we saw a review of the military students belonging to the Academy which is located in the old Royal Palace, a magnificent building of the reign of Charles III of Spain. Unfortunately it has been twice completely gutted by fire and now is about to be again restored. The Cathedral is fine but not in any way magnificent; the really curious thing about it being that, in a separate chapel, is still held the Muzarabic rites. This was an ante-Catholic faith which was held to be the true one during the occupation of Toledo by the Moors. It was tolerated by them at the time of their holding Toledo and when they were finally driven out was the subject of very serious dissensions, all sorts of miracles being attempted to prove which (the Catholic or Muzarabic) was the true faith. I don't know enough about it nor have I space, but you ask Fräulein or Dr. X. to look it all out for you as it most interesting. At last, at seven p.m., more dead than alive we got into the train and returned to Madrid. We had dinner in the train, which was more comforting, the only other refreshment through the day of seven hours on our feet being some beer and ices in a disused but most curious old Jewish synagogue. Madrid and bed and profound sleep brings us to Thursday. Again we are turned over to the energetic and indefatigable Infanta. First to the armoury.

Now one understands by this word a collection of armour but this collection is quite unrivalled, for it is not the armour and arms of Tom, Dick or Harry, but absolutely the collection of armour for battle or tournaments on horseback and on foot of all the kings of Spain, commencing with Charles V and Ist of Spain. The swords of every king and great general, trophies from Lepanto, where in Philip II's reign Don John of Austria defeated the Turks. The sword of Boabdil, called "El Rey Chico" or the Little King, who was the last King of Granada, and a host of other things too numerous to mention or my letter would become a sort of indifferent Murray's guide. After, we went to the Royal Stables. These are beautifully arranged. They have here now two hundred and seventy horses and fifty mules. Some of the ponies are quite beautiful and I thought of you and Princess Victoria and Sandra and how you would have liked to give them all some sugar. But there were so many I am afraid you would have

to have a donkey cart full of sugar so that each one might have some. One little white pony, a great duck, was had out and trotted round and he is an ambling pony; you know what that means, but if you had seen the pace he went, it is the most extraordinary thing you could imagine. There is also a most curious white horse, all over black spots, not an ordinary piebald, but each spot quite distinct. We also saw a very smart four-in-hand that the Queen drives and also the Infanta Isabel's four-in-hand of Spanish ponies and Spanish harness and bells. At one we went to lunch with the Duke and Duchess of Fernan Nuñez. We had a most excellent luncheon and as the newspapers say "the choicest wines." A beautiful house with beautiful things in it, and we saw all over it.

In the evening, five to eight p.m., Sir Clare Ford, the English Ambassador, gave a party where all Madrid assembled. There were some very pretty ladies, but I was not so very much struck by the beauty of Spain. All the ladies powder their faces here so much and it has a very peculiar effect, making them look so white and then their very dark eyes shine out and look darker than ever. That evening the Queen was quite well again and was at dinner. Friday the news was so bad about the poor Emperor Frederick that the Duke did not come but the remainder went to the Escorial again by special train. This is the largest palace, I think, in the world and was built by Philip II, son of Emperor Charles V. The style of architecture is the most severe I have ever seen, for in all the huge mass of building there is absolutely no ornamentation. The Royal Chapel is huge and very fine. In the crypt below lie the remains of all the kings and queens and children and Royal personages, commencing with the great Emperor Charles V. It is very fine but rather melancholy and the idea is horrid, I think, to go and sit with ancestors' bones close by, which have been dead some of them for three centuries.

Returning from the Escorial at four o'clock we came back to the palace, there to hear the sad news of the death of the Emperor. Of course all parties were put off, so we could not go to a garden party at the Duchess of Alba's; she is the daughter of our former host and hostess, the Duke and Duchess of Fernan Nuñez. She married the Duke of Alba, and they have a magnificent house. Neither could we dine with the Russian Minister who had arranged a party for the Duchess, and so we come on to Saturday which was spent quietly seeing the Palace at Aranjuez, a charming place with a lovely park and avenues of trees for miles.

The Palace was built by Charles III of Spain and is a fine building, though there is nothing inside. We went all over it and had luncheon under the huge plane trees with the river running close by. After, we were driven for miles and miles by the Infanta Isabel with her four ponies, through the beautiful avenues in the park. We saw all the little foals and horses they keep there. There are about four hundred altogether. There is a tiny, tiny

donkey that came from Africa; he is not bigger than Sandy¹ and the Queen can carry him about in her arms. We saw too such a nice little black pony. I think the Duchess would very much like to have a pair of Spanish ponies and she has been asking about getting a good pair. The best come from Navarre. I have tried to persuade her that if she gets the ponies she ought also to get the real Spanish four-in-hand harness and then you could learn to drive four-in-hand and the harness is so pretty, with all the little red woollen balls and the bells. The animals are so covered, especially about the head and neck, that you can hardly see them. The Infanta Isabel drives quite beautifully, and it would really have made you hold your breath to see some of the corners and narrow places she turned round often at almost full gallop. She speaks English and French, but she talks so fast it is most difficult to understand her, especially if you are not able, through the noise of the train, to catch all her words.

To-day we are to see the tapestries which, owing to want of space, are not always hung up. However, they have been all put up on purpose and this afternoon we shall have the real treat of seeing this wonderful collection. Alas, Sunday, to-day, is our last day and so will end one of the pleasantest, and quite the most interesting week I have ever spent. Don Antonio, an Infante d'Espagne, has also accompanied us in all our expeditions. He is the husband of the Infanta Eulalie and they were in London for the Queen's Jubilee. To-day the Queen has taken the Duke and Duchess and Prince George to lunch at the Infanta Eulalie's house. Unfortunately she has been laid up the whole time we have been here, and has not been able to join in any of the expeditions. To-night we start at 7.45 in two saloon carriages and arrive at Valencia at 10 o'clock to-morrow morning. The Fleet will go to Port Mahon and we in the *Surprise* run up and see Tarragona and then on to Mahon. From there I hope we may take the Duke and Duchess to Palma and visit some wonderful caves at Arta. On the 23rd the *Surprise* leaves Port Mahon for Marseilles and the Duchess arrives at Coburg, probably on the 20th, so *there* is a red letter day for you to look forward to.

Lady Mary was quite ill for one day on account of the fatigue of running about but she is all right again now and able to travel to-night.

Now I must wind up my long story which, I hope, may amuse you. Recollect that it will be the greatest pleasure to receive a letter from you, for it will always be of the greatest interest to me to hear of and about you all and you must write now and again. We went to a chocolate manufactory near the Escorial and the Duchess is taking a large boxful of chocolates which we saw being made.

Now good-bye and with my love to Prince Alfred and your sisters, and a fat kiss for the "Koorosity."

Believe me to be yours very sincerely,

MAURICE A. BOURKE.

¹ Our collie dog.

PETERSBURG.

Monday, January [?], 1890.

MY DEAR PRINCESS MARIE,

I would really have written before but somehow or another I never seem to have had a moment. Anyhow I must tell you what fun I have had. In the first place I don't find it nearly as cold as I expected. I am told it is often the case that when one first comes here one hardly feels the cold at all. There is a Prince Belosselsky who is attached to the Duke who is a very nice man and who takes care of Lady Coke and myself. He lives in a very nice house on the border of St. Petersburg, and we have been there to luncheon and he has taken us out in his ice boat and we have also done some skating. It was very cold, though, for skating and all of Lady Coke's toes got nearly frost-bitten, and she had to go into the house and have her toes rubbed with spirit to bring back the circulation. She said it hurt her awfully.

Another really grand amusement here is the ice hills. Sitting on a small sledge you go down an awfully steep incline and then dash along the flat part of ice at oh ever so many miles an hour. I began by being conducted down, till gradually I plucked up courage to go by myself. I got on capitally the first day and only got the most ordinary fall, but the second day I went I started at once by myself, and being too bold or too stupid, I found myself flung about in a sitting position on the ice in the most comical manner. At last I went down and of course upset, but this time I managed to give my thumb a hideous sprain and it hurt very much, so I had to sit that night with my thumb bandaged in ice and arnica to get the swelling down.

Another thing I have accomplished is being shot out of a sledge. You are always buttoned in by a great bearskin rug. Well, I did not know this dodge and I was driving very comfortably along talking to one of the Embassy men with whom I was going to the ice hills when the sledge caught a stone and gave a bump sideways, and out I shot, spread-eagled, like a great turtle in the road, my hat one way and my legs the other, and all wrapped up in my fur coat, which, of course, got covered with snow. However, no bones were broken, and besides I laughed very much and so indeed did everyone else.

Last Thursday Mr. Morier, the English Ambassador's son, and myself went off in search of bears which he had heard of. He had never been out before and of course neither had I. We took food and a man from the Embassy to speak Russian. We started off from here at 3 p.m. and went down the line about eighty versts, which is fifty miles. This journey took us six hours, so it proves that I think one could almost run and kick your hat along the line as fast as the train went. Well, after the train we got into little, low, country, basket sledges, and off we went in a procession of four of these, one in each, the servant in the third and the luggage last.

After three hours' bumping and hopping up and down we arrived at and stopped in a village; I must say my first impression of sledge-driving was not particularly pleasant but I think it was a great deal my own fault for I had not learnt the way to make myself comfortable. After tea in a log hut we started off again, this time for a six hours' journey. Again I did not succeed in making myself as comfortable as I afterwards learned to do; however the result was that I did not sleep a wink all night. I managed all the same to keep very warm notwithstanding that it was snowing all night and there were ten degrees Réaumur of frost. The snow bothered me a great deal, for it kept falling and melting on the end of my nose which kept me constantly employed wiping and drying it. However after some breakfast of fried eggs and stuff from our provision basket, we went off in search of bear number one. He wasn't at home and I don't think ever had been and so we were sold.

However, we were to drive on another twenty miles for another beat. This we did and were rewarded by being excellently well placed, and after the beaters were also in place, out came a fine bear. Mr. Morier fired first and knocked him over but he got up and went on. I got a long shot and broke one of his hind legs. We were unlucky, for there not being much snow, the bear was able to go so fast, which he did, and also the trees were very thick, so, alas, he got away. We followed his tracks for some distance, but had to give it up and, moreover, we could not wait to pursue him further as we had to get back to Petersburg for the big ball. But I hope they will bring up the bear to us, for we heard from the trackers before we left that we should have easily got him if we had stayed another day, so we asked them to bring him to St. Petersburg if they managed to get him.

It was a most delightful trip, and sledging through these forests both by day and night is quite the most fascinating thing in the world to do. I am hoping to get some more, though this week Lady Coke and I, with Mr. Solovieff, are going to Moscow, which of course we must see.

I am not particularly struck by the Russian ladies for beauty, but many of the men are very handsome and the uniforms in the palace on big functions are magnificent.

There was a ball to two thousand people last night which was magnificently done; at supper the whole two thousand sat down together. There will be a regular course of balls now right into Lent.

Now, dear Princess Marie, I must send you all my best love. I wonder if the box addressed to Fräulein, with the picture in it, ever reached. Perhaps you would ask her.

Good-bye, with best love, from

Yours, very sincerely,

MAURICE A. BOURKE.

In his uniquely humorous way Captain Bourke would also paint his

future portrait as that of an old red-faced admiral with thick, curly white hair and jovial smile. He never lived to become an admiral, alas, and the latter part of his career was darkened by a terrible naval disaster, the loss of H.M.S. *Victoria*.

Well do I remember receiving the news of that disaster, a few months after my marriage, whilst I was struggling amidst the difficulties of adjustment in a foreign country. My mother telegraphed the loss of the *Victoria*, but that Maurice Bourke, thank God, was amongst the saved. The shock was terrible, but I remember my tears of gratitude because nothing had happened to "Captain dear" as we called our great friend.

No British heart will ever forget the loss of H.M.S. *Victoria*, proud flagship of Admiral Tryon and first Dreadnought of her time. The whole Mediterranean Fleet was making some manœuvre near Tripolis on June the 22nd, 1893; Maurice Bourke was captain of the *Victoria*, and the Admiral-in-command, Sir George Tryon, was on board. Tryon gave an order that, according to Maurice Bourke, it was impossible to execute. Bourke protested and tried to prove that the desired manœuvre was impossible owing to the too limited space; Tryon insisted upon the movement being carried out, with the result that the smaller of the two warships in turning ran into the *Victoria* and cut her in two!

In five minutes the proud vessel sank, in sight of the whole Fleet, turning right over, nose downwards, man and mouse going down with her. Owing to the colossal churning of the waters and suction of the sinking ship, few boats could approach sufficiently near to save those who were drowning.

Bourke was amongst the few saved. He had gone down with the rest, but the sea by some strange chance threw him up again, whilst Admiral Tryon, with many hundreds, was drowned.

Owing to the loss of his admiral, Bourke was never quite able to clear himself, for the man who had given the fatal order was no longer there to speak, or to admit his responsibility for it, and "Captain dear's" lips were sealed, for who can accuse the dead?

A cruel fate, one that broke our brave captain's heart! Maurice Bourke never got over this terrible tragedy, he was never the same man after it; his health went to pieces and he died much before his time.

I still possess his letters, so full of life, so full of humour, so full of fun, and on days when the present feels heavy and I want to make the

beloved past live again, I take those precious letters out from their resting-place and read them through one by one.

I can honestly say that Maurice Bourke was my first love. He was indeed a hero to me, and I have even known fits of agonizing jealousy when I was afraid he might care for one of my sisters more than for myself. To him I was but a nice little girl with fair hair and high spirits; he made no distinction between us, but to me he was a sort of god come down into our midst.

"Captain dear," precious friend of our childhood, you are no more of this world, but your memory is green in my heart and my thoughts will ever turn to you with love and gratitude. The remembrance of you is pure joy, I delight in calling up before me your face, your smile, your delicious humour, your wide-minded, unstinted kindness and understanding: they are so many treasures of which time cannot rob me. You were indeed a hero to three little girls on the brink of life, may your memory be blessed for ever, a thousand, thousand times blessed!

There is one strange little incident in connexion with the sinking of the *Victoria* that I would like to relate. It is one of those small unexplained miracles that come to pass.

Captain Bourke kept all the letters we children wrote to him in a special box which followed him on all his voyages. When the sea had finally calmed down after the complete disappearance of the proud iron-clad, different bits of wreckage were rescued from the water, and amongst other flotsam this box with our letters was found floating on the surface. The bottom of the box was gone, but it had turned over on its lid and not one of the letters had been lost! And floating alongside of it were two things my mother had given him; a silver bowl and, of all things, a walking stick with a Russian stone egg top to it!

Strange coincidence that just those three things, dear mementoes of the happy Malta days, should have been saved! To us it appeared like a sign that nothing could break that perfect friendship which bound us together.

CHAPTER VI

MORE MALTA MEMORIES

THERE was also another great friend in those Malta days of innocence and that was Cousin George. Cousin George, though ten years older than I, was also very young in those days and not a bit too grand and grown up to be happy in our company.

I do not think he was even called the Duke of York then, but simply Prince George. He was also in H.M.S. *Alexandra* under my father's command. Both my parents were very fond of him, and there was always a room ready for him at San Antonio when he was not on service.

Cousin George was a beloved chum. He too was able to keep the unruly trio in order. He called us "the dear three," but I proudly remember that in the case of Cousin George I was a decided favourite, there was no doubt about that whatever. What fun we had with George, what delightful, harmless fun! He used to drive us in a high, two-wheeled dog-cart; the horse he drove was called Cocky, a steady brown cob. One of us sat beside him and the other two at the back. Those at the back were generally kneeling on the seat and chattering for all they were worth with the two in front.

There were also glorious rides with Cousin George who had a horse called Real Jam, a beautiful glossy bay.

In Malta everybody was interested in his neighbour's horse; they so belonged to the life there that they were like part of the family. Real Jam was a perfect creature and was taken back to Sandringham by his master when the Malta days came to a close.

Whenever he could Cousin George joined our Saturday picnics, and he was fond of declaring that the "dear three" were much better behaved and less unruly when he was leader of the wild horde.

It was certainly Allenby, or "Full Moon," who was the most irrepressible. The days when he was one of the party were days of high jinks.

I have found old letters from George expressing a hope "that Allenby

has been behaving himself"; George preferred being first-in-command on the days when rowdy Allenby was not one of the party.

But neither Cousin George nor boisterous Allenby was at a certain picnic to which a sadly humiliating remembrance is attached. We had ridden to some far-off part of the island and there Mamma, Lady Mary and her daughters had joined us by carriage for tea. It was a beautiful sunny day and we were a cheerful party, Mamma very proud of a new bay she had discovered on the farther side of the island. Mamma loved voyages of discovery. The last bit of the road down to the seashore was steep and we were all on foot, as it had been considered risky to follow such a precipitous path on horseback. On the way up again, Mamma proposed that Lady Mary, who was delicate and easily tired, should, so as not to fatigue herself, ride up the steepest part of the climb on Tommy's back.

Tommy was a sturdy little beast and well up to the weight of one as frail as Lady Mary, but Mademoiselle's insinuations against Mamma's friend had made their mark and lay festering in our minds. Mamma's quite innocent proposal suddenly made our resentment against her burst into flame. Our horses were sacred to us, we were idiotically jealous about them and no one was ever allowed to get on them except ourselves or the groom, so we noisily proclaimed that "poor" Tommy could not possibly carry a grown-up person on his back.

Mamma, ashamed of her ungracious little girls, swept our objections aside and quite rightly insisted upon the very much perturbed Lady Mary getting on to Tommy's back, which she finally did. A disgraceful scene followed. Entirely carried away by our rage, whilst climbing the hill behind Mamma, Tommy and his burden, we vituperated Lady Mary to her daughters who were walking beside us, and goodness knows what unforgivable things we said to our three little friends about their mother. All Mademoiselle's unfounded accusations against Lady Mary came all unconsciously from our lips.

When the top of the hill was reached, Lady Mary got off and Tommy was given over again to his rightful mistress, and we all three remounted.

Mamma, to mark her pained disapproval of her offending children, drove off without a word and without even casting a look behind her. This was as fuel to the flame of our wrath. In floods of tears, like three



COUSIN GEORGE—THE DUKE OF YORK—ON "REAL JAM"



CHARACTERISTIC VIEW OF MALTA



PICTURE OF VERDALA, LOOKING DOWN TOWARDS THE BOSCHETTO

God-forsaken little savages, giving rein to our horses, we dashed full gallop after the carriage, roaring with rage and sticking our tongues out as far as they would go, whilst we hurled at Lady Mary's head all the ugly epithets of which our somewhat limited vocabulary could boast.

No doubt there was also a comic side to this most reprehensible scene. It must have been a fine sight to see three ill-behaved little Amazons tearing full tilt along the high road, behind that well-turned-out, sedate-looking pony-cart in which sat two ladies who could only save their dignity by pretending to ignore that they were being pursued by a trio of weeping little furies with their tongues stuck out!

Many years later we found an old letter addressed to our brother in which Ducky had made a sketch of this scene.

There may be at certain moments in life a bitter satisfaction in letting your temper get the better of you, in revelling in your wrath, but the "afterwards" is all sorrow and mortification. Restored to your senses you see how pitiful and futile was your outburst and the exultation of your fury gives place to shame and humiliation.

All this and more was experienced when we reached home about half an hour after Mamma. Lady Mary had retired to her own apartment to repair her shattered nerves, but on the threshold of her room stood Mamma like the angel with the flaming sword.

Oh, terrible moment of retribution when, with hanging heads, red noses and swollen eyes we stood facing her righteous indignation. As can well be imagined she did not spare us. She said we were to ask God to forgive us, because *she* could not, that she was ashamed of having to call us her children and other equally hard things that penetrated to the very marrow of our bones.

We all three finally collapsed on some small stairs leading from Mamma's boudoir to her dressing-room, a dark little corner where our humiliation was hidden in shadow. There we lay, three little heaps of misery, faces turned towards the dusty carpet, which was quite in keeping with our abasement, crushed by the enormity of our sin, overcome by Mamma's bitter reproof, feeling that we deserved every word of her upbraiding.

But words were not sufficient chastisement. Our outraged parent hit upon a really effective punishment. Our beloved horses were banished for a whole long week from the royal stables and to our public shame

were conducted to the "Ditch," which was the name of the big stables where all our naval friends kept their horses. It was called the "Ditch" because it was built in the large moat encircling Valletta.

This was a cruelly well-chosen penalty, as it was a way of letting all our riding-companions know that we were in disgrace.

Cousin George was very kind on this occasion. He was truly sorry for "the dear three," though of course he could not approve of what we had done. But even to-day I can feel what a delicious relief it was to lay my humiliated head upon his shoulder, and to weep my heart out, my face hidden in the mass of my "yellow" hair. I believe that Cousin George's handkerchief was also very welcome on this occasion, because does one ever at such tragic moments find one's own?

"Poor dear little Missy," said Cousin George, "poor dear little Miss," and Missy learned at that hour how very sweet the big, grown-up cousin could be!

The island of Malta is full of charm for those who have eyes to see; full of interest too for archæologists and historians.

We were too young to take a scientific interest in any of its treasures. In those days, alas, old churches and Phœnician ruins meant little to us, and the ride to get there, or the narcissi growing among the fallen stones, delighted us more than the monuments themselves. But we were intensely aware of the fascination of the island itself, so curiously stony, in a way so secretive, keeping its beauties hidden behind stone walls.

In Malta everything was walled in. At first sight the whole island appears to be nothing but an ocean of rock and stone, with occasional patches of fields of clover, beans, or artichokes; I have no remembrance of seeing wheat, barley or maize fields, but that was perhaps because we were there during the autumn, winter and early spring months only. But those fields of clover and beans, how I remember them! The clover was of giant growth, knee-high and intensely ruby-red, with strong leaves and stems which we would steal for our beloved horses; I can still hear the satisfaction with which they crunched that luscious green. And what sweetness there was in riding back of an evening, all the air saturated with the scent of those beans.

That, and a smell of coffee in the villages and also of a certain herb (or was it the fuel with which the peasants cooked their food?),

were the characteristic Malta smells, to be met with all over the island.

The women were fond of brewing their coffee in the middle of the street on small transportable charcoal stoves made of sandstone. In Malta, villages are more like small closed towns, the streets are narrow and twisting, the houses are high, with balconies jutting out, and one gets sudden delightful glimpses of patios or inner courts, full of flowers and colour, full of dazzling light and deep shade, mysterious retreats, very Oriental or Spanish-looking.

This was one of our chief enchantments, trying to peep through secretive-looking doors into these hidden corners of beauty.

Strict orders had been given us not to gallop through the villages. It sounds rather extraordinary that such an order should have been necessary, but on horseback we were like a horde of invaders, real little Huns taking possession of conquered ground.

As before mentioned, every road in Malta is bordered by high stone walls, so that sometimes you come quite unexpectedly upon the villages. The entry to the village is marked by a large scarlet line painted on the wall. This line was a signal that we had to set our horses to foot-pace. At the beginning we used to enjoy scaring the women and children by our sudden mounted invasion. With shrieks the mothers would rush to the rescue of their infants, trying at the same time to save their precious little stone stoves. There would be much noise, amidst a fluttering of dusty hens' wings, a smell of coffee, mingled with the perfume of that special herb; there would be laughter and much chatter, for the Maltese are kindly and full of words. They never seemed to be angry with us. I suppose we filled the world with our youth, our good humour and our *joie de vivre*; anyhow I never remember a cross face even before the order had been given that there was to be no galloping through the villages.

Almost every community, even the smallest, has a huge cathedral-like church built mostly in baroque style and of yellowish sandstone. On feast days there is a great ringing of bells and all the inhabitants flock together in the church square. There is a lot of blue about the rough stuff the men use for their coats, butcher blue, a very pretty shade which does not fade in the sun, whilst the characteristic of the women is the "faldetta," a sort of black silk mantle they wear over their heads which is whaleboned on one side and makes it curve out. No other country

has this head-dress, and the legend goes that the women of Malta adopted it after the island's occupation by Napoleon's troops, as a sign of mourning for all the indignities its women had to submit to during that period. They can hold their "faldetta" in such wise that it can entirely conceal their faces, and it is a very efficient protection against the sun, but when it is windy, which is often the case in Malta, the "faldetta" bulges out like a black balloon.

The Maltese language seems to be a mixture of Italian and Arabic, and has curious guttural sounds in it. Like the Italians the islanders are very fluent in conversation. They are very much the same type as the Neapolitans and the women love to sit chattering on their door-steps. They are only good-looking when quite young; later they become stout and heavy. The children are often curly-haired and lovely with huge dark eyes; the streets of the villages seem alive with them, their happy voices or quarrelsome cries reverberating against the high house walls.

There are many large villas and forsaken palaces scattered about the island, remnants of days of wealth and grandeur; one often sees monumental portals surmounted by huge complicated coats-of-arms carved in stone, proud mementoes of past glories, nowadays often leading into nothing more than a farmyard or forsaken habitation.

Every garden in Malta is shut away behind high walls. This adds to the delight of discovery and it is only on days when the front porch or door has been left open that one gets glimpses of these secluded paradises. It was a continual excitement to try and discover these lovely retreats, and when I returned to Malta so many years later and drove in a motor through the narrow, twisting streets of the villages, I was seized by exactly that same sensation of ill-repressed eagerness to peep behind each closed door, feeling certain that there were beauties hidden away beyond my reach.

We found this feeling of mystery everywhere. The formation of the ground itself helped to add to this sensation that there was in each place something to be discovered. There were deep valleys, small canyons cleft out of the rocks. Often one end was quite shallow, and you hardly realized that you were on the path to these deeply hidden oases. By degrees you went down, down, ever farther down, till you were walking between two walls or rocks, and here below there was a green world of olive, carob and loquat trees, mixed with bamboos and sometimes

orange groves. These deep valleys were a source of inexpressible enchantment, their secretiveness had something to do with the spell they threw over you. Here there were also wonderful flowers, vast stretches of double narcissi, white and yellow, incredibly sweet-scented, anemones, asphodels, and all sorts of other flowers for which we had no names.

I shall never forget our ecstasies over an olive grove discovered one Christmas Eve, which was entirely carpeted by these fragrant narcissi. We jumped off our horses and gathered great bunches of them which we brought triumphantly back to Mamma. On Christmas Eve, that was a miracle in itself! Their only drawback was that a sticky slime, extremely detrimental to clothes, oozed from their stalks.

A lover of beauty as I was even then, certain corners of Malta have stamped themselves for ever on my mind. Sudden revelations that came to you like pictures bursting on your mind.

I remember a ride to a far corner of the island, to a place where we had never before been. We had dismounted from our horses, and Ducky and I were running hand in hand, jumping the low walls separating one field from another. Beyond lay the sea, a blue glory woven with silver. We came to a series of orange groves, planted in flat terraces one above the other leading gradually down to the shore; narrow stone canals of water kept the place moist and beneath the orange trees were plantations of huge, pale blue Parma violets. The place was one of the utmost secret enchantment. We ran and ran, our joy lending wings to our feet; the world seemed to be a garden of beauty planned for our delight.

All of a sudden we came out from under the shade of the orange trees and there before us lay a square reservoir of water in which the sky reflected its azure face; beyond, the sea had the same colour, only deeper, more intense, and all around the edge of the tank lay huge orange pumpkins, painting violent blotches of colour against all that blue. The air was full of the song of larks, full of the fragrance of violets and orange blossom. Oh, beautiful world, full of ecstasy! We stood still and drank it all in; there was revelation in it, something almost holy which made us long to fold our hands and give thanks.

One of those deep little canyon-valleys I have spoken of we called the Happy Valley. It was with "Captain dear" that we first discov-

ered it. And one day we planned a donkey-ride through its mysteries.

Passionate riders though we were, we imagined that a donkey-ride would be excellent fun. Malta, like all Eastern countries, is of course full of donkeys, delightful little beasts with every quality and defect natural to donkeys.

The Happy Valley was too stony to be approached on horseback, so donkeys were quite the thing. Mamma made no protest, so innumerable small donkeys, grey, brown and black, were commandeered for us and our friends. This donkey-ride was a complete success. I selected a small black donkey that proved a good choice, for he was quick and willing, and to my great delight I was able to keep ahead of the party most of the time. I was always fond of leading and in those days it was a great humiliation to be beaten by anyone else. We all rode bare-back of course; the donkeys were somewhat bony, but if you sat well back as the peasants do, you could get along with comparative ease.

The green oasis hidden in the heart of the Happy Valley heard glad laughter that day, voices gay and young that awoke many echoes amongst its rocks. Mamma and the more sedate elders followed on foot and their laughter mingled with ours, because donkey-rides are always full of humorous incidents. Allenby was of course one of the chief actors on this happy day.

Verdala, the Governor's summer palace beyond Città Vecchia, was also one of our favourite playing grounds. The house stood high, and was a mighty square, thick-walled building of ochre-yellow stone. There was something fortress-like about it, a deep moat running all around, in which herb gardens had been planted.

Dominating its surroundings, it had a superb sweeping view from its front windows, and a narrow, stone-paved road ran down from its lower gardens in a straight line, through a deep dale to a place full of shade called the Boschetto. Here there was a sort of grotto with a fountain in very ornate Italian baroque style. Fine trees grew in this place, and there were also orange, olive and loquat groves and little oasis-like valleys running out from it in two directions.

Beyond the valley, on another eminence, stood the Inquisitor's Palace, a gaunt, bleak building, silhouetted against the horizon. Its name alone suggested mystery, gloom, and its isolated situation did everything to heighten this grim impression.



SAN ANTONIO



THE BELOVED LITTLE SHELTER AT VERDALA, WHICH I FOUND AGAIN
AFTER FORTY YEARS



BEGINNING TO GROW UP: AT THE AGE OF FIFTEEN



MY BROTHER ALFRED AT THE AGE OF EIGHTEEN

The grounds of Verdala were to us an inexhaustible source of discoveries; they were typically full of Malta mystery, beginning with the moat and descending by a gradual decline to the deep, shadow-filled valley below. This gradual descent was fenced off terrace-wise by those loosely heaped stone walls, so easily demolished when you wanted to break through into a field. Here we were allowed to run wild and there was no end to our enchantment.

Every nook was like fairy-land, and one day to our joy we discovered a wee rounded hut of porous stone, very much the shape of the bee-hive grottoes in Mamma's garden, only large enough to harbour us all and entirely overgrown with bush ivy. This adorable little building was probably a shelter for those working in the fields or amongst the orange groves, but it was always empty when we were there and became the basis of all our rambles.

On my return to Verdala, forty years later, I still found this enchanted shelter exactly as it was then! For thus do even the simplest things men build outlast the hands that built them.

There is something about Malta which was, so to say, in touch with my inner being. Somehow I *felt* it, was *one* with it, and when returning after so many years, a whole lifetime lying between, it clutched at my heart exactly in the same way. It was ecstasy, almost pain; something in the line, the colouring, the way a thorny cactus grew like a spiky monster beside a square, flat-roofed house where orange pumpkins lay drying in the sun; the way a carob tree would lean over a wall, the way the water in a wee aqueduct would run with a little gurgling sound under the shade of an orange grove with the sea shining blue beyond, the glimpse you would catch of a garden all white with huge round daisy bushes. And everywhere that strange feeling that there was something hidden, not yet explored, worlds of beauty, gardens of enchantment you could stumble upon at any moment. Nothing that I have seen in later life has ever had exactly that same charm, has ever meant quite as much to me; it is pure bliss even to live it over all again in my mind.

I know that our age had something to do with the glamour of those Malta days, we were just between childhood and girlhood, when everything is revelation and all dreams reality. A thick curtain lay over good and evil, no unhealthy curiosity disturbed our peace of mind; there was

as yet no desire towards the fruit of knowledge, all was enchantment, no sad blight had ever entered our Garden of Eden. People had faces, not masks, and when they smiled it was because they were happy; we never could have imagined that a smile could mean anything else. We sounded no depths, worried over no problems, the world lay open before us and the future was far off. . . .

In a word, it was the age of innocence—the paradise one never can enter again when its threshold into the world of reality has once been crossed. . . .

But I dare not linger too long in one place, even in Paradise. Life rolls on, so my pen must leave even my Garden of Eden to turn towards sterner things.

A last look back . . . and I see the faces of all those who played a part in that, oh most happy phase of my life. Some were to disappear for ever, some to follow me closely, some at a distance, some to become but hazy memories lost in the mist time gradually spreads over the past.

There were all the Maltese servants; Beppo who followed all our picnics with the tea-basket and Russian samovar; Tony the local policeman, pale, tall and dark, and utterly devoted to us children; then there was Beppo No. 2 the stable boy, and the gardener with his assistants, not to mention the innumerable humble friends scattered about the four corners of the island, who, with broad smiles and guttural exclamations of good-will, would consent to our invading their gardens or fields, allowing us to plunder their oranges, loquats or violets, demolishing with their own hands their crumbling walls to let us pass. Genial, kind-hearted peasants, with whom we talked by pantomime gestures only.

Above all there were our dearest chums and followers, the flagship midshipmen: Beatty, Streatfield, Rumbold, Back and others, companions who were not above enjoying the same wild games as the "three little princesses" at San Antonio. And those cooking parties on the *Alexandra* when we fried eggs and bacon for tea, when we washed our hands at the midshipmen's chests, each in the basin of her own special friend, Beatty being in those days my elected favourite. And what climbs down the docks when the ship was being repainted or cleaned, rather like scaling the pyramids, so huge were the steps. What fun, but how detrimental to our clothes! And those wild games of follow-my-

leader through the San Antonio gardens, or all over the different levels of the great house's roofs.

The rides on the Massa, or the thundering gallops along the hard high-roads, the picnics by the seaside or in some forsaken villa-garden, or in one of the forts guarding the four corners of the island.

And all the different captains and officers of the many men-of-war under the Duke of Edinburgh's command, the tea parties on board, certain faces more in evidence than others, but all friendly, welcoming, pleased to see the three little sisters: Captain Le Strange, Captain Fellows, Sir Charles Cust, Hedworth, Lambton, Fortescue, Colville, Keppel, Neville, Gamble . . . and others whose names I have forgotten.

There were amongst our lady friends Miss Blundell, who afterwards married Colin Keppel, whose fresh beauty I admired with youthful enthusiasm, Mrs. Barron, oh so charming, Mrs. Slade, Lady Hely Hutchinson and also little Countess Iguanez from amongst the Maltese aristocracy, whom we only saw now and again. My mother knew and appreciated many other Maltese families, but as in those days we were too young to go out, we met them less. There was also little Gladys Fetherstonhaugh, the only little girl play-fellow I remember, a lively child full of fun and imagination. Faces, many faces, and all are smiling and kind, each loved in their own way, some more, some less, according to the parts they played in our lives.

And after three years all this had to be left! Papa's command in the Mediterranean was over, a page had to be turned; one act had been played; good or bad, the next must follow; sad or joyful, time would not be held back, the world was turning, not standing still . . . *tout passe!* . . .

So the cruel day of parting came; it was indeed like death, death to a time that had been sheer, unclouded joy and happiness, a time without disappointment or disillusion with never a discordant note.

I shall never forget the unbearable sadness of seeing the rooms being dismantled by degrees, of visiting for the last time each beloved haunt, of taking leave of places and people, of rooms and gardens, knowing all the time that it was for ever, that there was no coming back, never, never, that it was over, done with, was to be entirely wiped out. *Tout passe.* . . .

And what a terrible good-bye on the deck of the *Surprise*, the Com-

mander-in-Chief's yacht that was to take us to Naples. All our friends had come for the last time; tears were shed, promises exchanged, touching little presents were secretly pressed into hands clasped for the last time. It was as though our hearts were being torn into little pieces. Subconsciously we understood we were leaving the best of our childhood behind us, that the doors of Paradise were being closed upon us, we were being driven out, we were setting our faces towards another fate. . . .

Thank God the dearest friend of all, Maurice Bourke, was to be with us still awhile. Being commander of the *Surprise* it was he who was to take us to Naples.

All the same that was a wonderful trip; we stopped at Palermo, Syracuse, Girgenti on the way. We were shown the marvels of Monreale and the Capella Palatina, we trod the shady cloisters of San Giovanni degli Eremiti, of which Mamma had the picture in her room. We rode up the Monte Pellegrino on donkeys, and saw St. Rosalia in her grotto, hung all over with the many ex-votos pious pilgrims brought her from afar. We saw the noble temples of Girgenti, the beautiful ruins and deep rock valley of Syracuse; and finally from Naples we went to Pompeii, and in the evening singers would come in boats to warble "Santa Lucia, "Mia Bella Napoli," and "Funiculi-Funicula" into the open windows of our cabins.

In those days I only *felt* art without understanding it. Nature meant more to me than things built by the hand of man. Only vaguely did I realize that Nature's beauties received a peculiar value by being the setting for titanic temples, dim churches and nobly-lined palaces looking down upon their gardens like ancient kings reigning over belongings which would not have been so regal had they not been there to possess them. Sea, rocks, frowning hills, were a background, an accompaniment, one heightened the value of the other. But poetry lived in my soul already at that early age. Beauty touched me, sank into my being. All the pictures I saw lay dormant in my mind, unforgettable, creating a nostalgia that drew me back to those places, a longing that would have to be satisfied one day.

Wonderful experiences, picture upon picture, treasures for the eyes, but all saturated with the melancholy of parting, of being torn away from a period that was to be set aside for something new, something

different. And what was being torn from us was so beautiful that we did not want anything new or different; with futile hands we were trying to clutch on to that which was already past . . . which already denied us—there *was* no holding fast; *Vorbei* . . . *vorbei* . . . it was the end. . . .

The last tearing asunder, the last renunciation of all that had been so unutterably precious, was the good-bye to the *Surprise* and to Captain Bourke.

The last evening, as was his pleasant habit when in his ship, he came to say good night and to tuck us into our little white bunks.

“Good-bye, Captain dear!”

“Good-bye, little girls, be good, so that ‘Captain dear’ can always be proud of you. Never forget that you are a sailor’s daughters and that you have the best mother in the world.”

“No, Captain dear, we will not forget.”

And we put our arms round his neck and kissed him, for the first and the last time, but at that agonizing hour of parting it could only be a kiss. . . .

“Good-bye, Captain dear, good-bye . . . good-bye. . . .!”

The official parting was next morning, but that was the real good-bye, the good-bye that counted, the good-bye in our precious white cabin, when he bent over us like a beloved elder brother and made us promise to be good.

Little did we know then, Captain dear, what pitfalls life has and how difficult it is to be good.

PART TWO
YOUTH

CHAPTER VII

THE COBURG YEARS

WITH the relinquishing of Malta a new phase started in our lives. We were growing up by slow degrees and the Garden of Eden was gradually fading into the background, and those who in these days had to do with our education managed to cast a certain blight over those last years of home-life.

I have set myself the difficult task of being as fair as possible in these pages, of trying to see questions from all sides; I want to keep all passion and resentment out of the recording of facts. So as not to be judged, I mean to judge with the extremest impartiality, but above all I must strictly stick to truth. I wish to speak ill of no one, but there are two people who, during these Coburg years, played a none too happy part in our lives and these were Dr. X., Alfred's tutor, and Fräulein, our governess.

They had great power in the house, especially as in those days, having to follow up our studies more seriously, we were often separated from our parents and left to their care.

Eastwell having been given up, there was no longer a country home in England, so from then on much more time was spent at Coburg, where Alfred was being educated. It was decided, so as to separate us less from our brother, that henceforward we sisters should also study with German masters and even be confirmed in the Lutheran instead of the Anglican Church.

Mamma, as I have already mentioned, had never felt altogether happy in England, and Coburg was very dear to her because of the simple life she could live there in that small town where *Gemütlichkeit* played a greater part than elegance.

Brought up at the most gorgeous court in Europe, Mamma had nevertheless the most simple tastes and was able in her German home to

live entirely according to her desires, uncontrolled by Grandmamma Queen and uncriticized by those who were inclined to find her ways foreign and out of keeping with British traditions.

Having lived my life of difficulties in a land that was also foreign to me at first, I can now understand things that in my youth I was inclined to criticize. Mamma found real independence at Coburg; there she was sole arbiter of her own fate, no tribunal sat over her, weighing all she did or left undone. There she was her own mistress; it was a small kingdom perhaps, but her will was undiscussed, she took her orders from no one, and could live as she wished.

Coburg was a wee town with picturesque old parts and an ancient fortress looking down upon it from a hill which could be seen from miles around. A town of simple burghers, uncritical and loyal, and in those days ruled over by old Duke Ernest, brother of the Prince Consort of England.

Uncle Ernest had his peculiarities which I shall later describe, so that his court was less rigorous than most of the small German courts, but it was omnipotent for all that, as all German courts, even the smallest, were in those "good old days."

There was an old-world simplicity about Coburg; it had the ways, habits, tastes of most wee German capitals, little centres of importance that did much for the prosperity of Germany as a whole. Looking back, I understand how cosy it all was, and how happy it might have been except for the over-great influence of two people who (perhaps all unconsciously) destroyed much of its harmony.

Dr. X. and Fräulein had wormed themselves entirely into Mamma's good graces. Their word became law, in all things their advice was taken, their insinuations were listened to, their ironies and criticisms admitted without discussion.

Dr. X. was a most intelligent man and won Mamma's favour by his extreme erudition. Being exceedingly cultured and well-read herself, she found in this clever man a fund of wisdom and learning. But he was German "Kultur" at its worst, arrogant, masterful, overruling everyone else, turning the best into ridicule, laying down the law, intolerant, tyrannical. But worst of all, he hated everything that was English, and this is what brought conflict into our lives. His object was to uproot in us the love of England and to turn us into Germans. We

resisted this with all our might, pitting our wills against his with that magnificent courage of children when their gods are attacked.

But so as to give each dog his due, I will say this of Dr. X.: he could be an excellent companion. No one could be more amusing, tell an anecdote so well, so successfully arrange an excursion or organize some fun. He could discourse masterfully upon any subject—history, geography, botany, religion, art, politics, social questions; he was always better informed than anyone else. But he had the unpleasant attribute of never allowing the other man a chance. His arrogance was complete and with sweeping assurance he would set aside or turn into ridicule any opinion opposed to his.

Alfred was entirely given over to him. During all our time in Malta, Dr. X. had been our brother's sole companion, except during the Christmas holidays which Alfred spent at Malta with us. Dr. X. was tyrannical with his pupil, impatient, intolerant, but worst of all, he liked to ridicule him before others, seeming to delight in making him blush and feel a fool. We sisters resented this with fierce indignation.

Dr. X. awoke in us all the feelings of rebellion that tyrants awake in the hearts of those they overrule. We dared not outwardly revolt or stand up against him, but with joy would we have planned his downfall.

Fräulein I might liken unto a south wind. Her voice was soft, her ways ingratiating. She seemed all kindness, sweetness, full of the love of humanity. No one could use more honeyed language; to quote a popular expression, you felt as though "butter would not melt in her mouth." At first we fell entirely under her charm. She was a pleasant contrast to Mademoiselle, that dry, shivering spinster; she was younger, better-looking, more of a lady; she came from a big family of impoverished aristocrats and had such interesting stories to tell about them all and their ways and about the old castle that was her home. Her gentle ways were captivating, you felt she would defend you, uphold you through thick and thin. Thus we were without defence before her and also without suspicion. Mamma had also been entirely won by her suave, engaging ways and language. She very soon became not only a favourite, but an adviser and one who was always consulted and listened to in preference to anyone else.

It was only by slow degrees that, with the sure instinct of children, we began to discover that she was something of a wolf in sheep's cloth-

ing, that her words were there to mask her thoughts, that her soft language was a covering for an irresistible, I might almost say instinctive, desire to undo those around her.

The stories she told sounded harmless, and you listened to them without mistrust, for they were amusing, well told, sometimes even touching, but there was poison in every word; there was also poison in her insinuations, and especially was there poison in her reticence and in the things she never quite said. She would seem to be pleading for someone whilst in reality, with almost diabolical cleverness, she was tearing them to pieces, leaving not a shred of their reputation, destroying them in your imagination for ever, much more surely than if she had done so with angry words.

Looking back upon her, I can only compare her to a miasma, to something invisible that, when you were most off your guard, lured into security by her sweet ways, tainted the air, made it unbearable. Her influence was uncannily pernicious. It destroyed good feeling, awoke enmities between those who loved each other most, made each man suspicious of his neighbour. She was as destructive as a dangerous bacillus.

Those who have not known her cannot picture to themselves how perfectly she could counterfeit the guileless, almost innocent girl telling a harmless little story to amuse the Duchess. She could put on an air of almost absent-minded simplicity. She spoke without accentuating her words, she made them smooth, like beautifully woven silk, and I can even now see the way she moved her lips whilst doing so. Little by little we came to loathe this gentle relating of innocuous stories; we knew to perfection the very airs she put on and were immediately on our guard, knowing that someone's reputation was going to be attacked, some servant was going to lose his place, some friend was going to be undermined, some master shown up in a false light.

It was torture to watch her ways, torture especially because Mamma never discovered till too late, how fundamentally, almost organically treacherous she was.

She had wormed herself into every part of the home's organizations; her advice was always asked and mostly taken; it was *her* appreciation that had weight, *her* report or version which was taken into account.

And as a last link to the chain of her power, Dr. X. fell in love with

her; she became his fiancée, later his wife, and the two together were a terrible force against which no old, loved influence or habit could stand.

The life at Coburg had its own special charm; it was simple and easy, though lessons in these years played a big part and we had some earnest masters who took us more or less severely in hand, trying to put some wisdom into us. We had many friends and the people in general were kindly and very delighted to come to or be associated with the court, which played a preponderant part and was the centre around which all desires and ambitions gravitated. Our house in town was called "Palais Edinburg," a cosy, spacious house of indifferent architecture, looking out upon the grand *Platz* or square, and facing the Ehrenburg which was the big official residence of the reigning Duke, but where he never resided.

The Schlossplatz was the central attraction of the town. Here on Sundays the band played and church-parade was held, the burghers strutting about in their best clothes, the chief swells being the officers of the local infantry battalion who paraded about in their best uniforms, mingling and yet not mingling with the crowd. Imbued with the importance of their cloth, they were a sect apart, had special privileges and received the consideration of high and low, ourselves not excluded.

All the children of Coburg used to assemble upon the Schlossplatz for their games and I can still hear the sound of their voices reverberating against the walls of Palais Edinburg, of the Ehrenburg, of the Hof-theater, of the Corps de Garde and of the great stone riding-school, which were the chief buildings fronting the huge square. These children's voices were the characteristic sound of the Coburg Schlossplatz and would penetrate through our open windows to the farthest corner of our rooms, the accompaniment of our hours of study and also of our hours of rest. Joyful, noisy and persistent, it seemed inherent in the square.

Though the town house was cosy enough, it was the Rosenau, our country castle, which was the real love of our hearts. It was an unpretentious little *Schloss* lying on a hill, comfortably false Gothic in style—a square building plastered ochre yellow, with a high roof and two pointed, crenellated façades. A naïve tower was stuck on on the garden side in which was a broad winding stair, the only stairs of the house.

When our parents took over Schloss Rosenau, it was full of incredibly old furniture, more or less Empire and Georgian, attractive but delightfully unpractical, and still more incredible old pictures, mostly of the florid romantic school, decorated its walls. We loved these pictures, they were full of poetry, their subjects were intricate and puzzling, and mostly remained mysterious, having never been explained. There was one especially, depicting a scene out of Chateaubriand's "Atalie," I believe, which attracted me extraordinarily. It represented an exquisite, milk-white maiden, enveloped by the wealth of her golden tresses, expiring in the arms of a distressed-looking Red Indian. Both the fair maiden and the romantic Indian were none the less tidy and exquisite for being out in the wilderness in such tragic circumstances. The grown-ups had a tolerant ironic smile for this china-smooth oil-painting, but when unobserved I would slink back to the dark corner where it hung and allow the poignant romance of it to thrill me through and through.

There was a glorious loft under the Rosenau's immense roof which was an endless source of delight. It was high, shadow-filled and thrillingly haunted by bats. During the daytime these spooky creatures dangled in neat rows from the rafters like loathsome black flowers with withered petals that some philtre-brewing witch had hung up to dry for uses of her own best not inquired into.

When, during some wild games with our friends, we invaded these closed regions, these ghoulish-like growths, slowly unfolding, would take life and fly about in noiseless agitation, their moist, cold wings uncomfortably near to our faces. This black horde gave just the last touch of the uncanny to our voyages of discovery, adding their vampire-like ubiquity to the already eerie atmosphere of the loft.

Little by little Mamma civilized the Rosenau. She put in baths and made the rooms cosy and comfortable, without spoiling its old-world atmosphere. She hung up many of her Malta pictures, but she would never allow electric light, considering it out of keeping with the quaint old place.

The inner architecture of the Rosenau was naïve and artless. Two long corridors ran down the middle of its two stories and all the rooms opened out into this passage, which had door-windows and small balconies at each end. On the ground floor there was a white stucco-marble

Saal, or hall, rather floridly Gothic, and vaulted, but not wanting in dignity. This large room opened out on to a gravelled space bordered by a field-like bed of unpretentious, old-fashioned but sweet-smelling roses, in which we daily scratched our legs and hands and tore our clothes.

Mamma, to our great delight, allowed us to take possession of the small room at the top of the round tower. This was quite a *Märchen* room, just the sort of chamber in which the Sleeping Beauty must have pricked her finger on the witch's spindle. This room was on a level with the loft and had three deep window-embrasures of which Ducky, Sandra and I each took one and arranged with love and care as though each nook had been a separate little room. All three of us had the home instinct to the highest degree and we loved arranging rooms. From earliest times I remember having had some wee corner which I arranged as my very own, and if I could not have a corner to myself, then it had at least to be a table.

This love of feeling at home in whatever place I may be has stayed with me all through life, and no matter where I am, hotel, train, ship, or guest in a strange house, I always make my own corner, indifferent how wee or simple it may be. I do not need precious things for this, an old piece of stuff, an earthenware jar, a handful of flowers, the absurdest little curio picked up, anything will do as long as colour, shape and line please my eye. This instinct for arranging rooms or corners is one that has given me some of my greatest interest and pleasure in life. It is an irresistible instinct, or shall I call it urge, towards beauty. I *must* have something about me that satisfies my eye; quite indifferent to whether it is precious or not, I can make delightfully pleasing arrangements with the simplest means.

The Rosenau belongs to the lost loves of my life. It is one of the places to which my heart yearns back. There was an atmosphere of homely simplicity about it which was unique, that peaceful exquisiteness inherent in old houses. The Rosenau had all the old German ingenious simplicity, it was quite the sort of *Landschloss* described in German novels.

Mamma had laid down straw mats instead of carpets, which gave a special odour to the whole house, which, whenever I smell it anywhere else, brings the Rosenau vividly back to me. That odour of straw-mat-

ting and a certain sound of splashing water from the fountain on the front terrace, are special characteristics of the old place.

Holding my breath it seems to me that I can still hear that splashing fountain. . . . The blinds are drawn down because it is hot outside . . . everything is still, rather somnolent, but beyond there is that water always splashing and also the sound of the old gardener raking the paths between the formal little flower-beds grouped round the fountain . . . that old fellow who seemed to be eternally raking the already too tidy little paths. . . .

And behind one of those closed doors sits Mamma in her fresh and fragrant boudoir, with the Malta pictures hung on her walls and all about her the many souvenirs brought from there. We can still live some of the Eastwell-Malta traditions over again here, here somehow Dr. X. and Fräulein have not pervaded the atmosphere with their destructive desire to abolish what had been. . . .

And Mamma's rooms were so full of flowers, for it is from Mamma that we all inherited that great love of flowers. She had planted great fields of sweet peas and carnations in the big kitchen garden below the *Schloss*, a little way off. Mamma was not a gardener, but a *lover* of flowers—of simple flowers; she did not care for complicated innovations, she liked them fragrant and old-fashioned. I cannot imagine her without her scissors and some sort of flowers in her hands. She was incredibly active; an early riser, she was always out and about the place before anybody else. She adored having meals outside, and our breakfast, tea and supper beneath the big apple tree near the lawn was a characteristic part of the Rosenau life, and we also lunched outside when the weather was not too hot.

Mamma was always the central figure; she liked to have her hours of solitude, as she was a voracious reader, but her eye was on all things. She did not personally take part in many of the amusements and activities, having in a way aged before her time. She had let herself grow stout and never went in for athletics of any kind; but she was the animator, the heart of the whole thing. She hated idleness, and loved to see those around her continually on the go, rejoicing over other people's pleasure. Though tyrannical, she was an excellent hostess. Her personality was dominant and she was never out of humour; her wit keen and quick, no one better than she could preside at a dinner-table and make

conversation flow. She was deliciously amusing, but she would tolerate no nonsense, and hated all affectations. She rather intimidated the young by her caustic remarks and sharp questions. Her eyes were penetratingly keen, you felt that nothing escaped them, and her humour alone saved her from being uncomfortably severe.

Outwardly placid, she was nevertheless of an anxious disposition; she took things to heart and worried over them, thereby also often worrying others; generous and almost masculinely intelligent, she had great tact and a heart of gold, but she could not always leave well alone.

She hated all things bad, wrong or ugly, and her desire towards perfection could occasionally make her intolerant, even unfair. She had no indulgence for the foibles of humanity. Herself deeply religious, she was righteously indignant against those who were lax in their beliefs and careless about church matters; it was best not to start religious discussions at her table, for you always got the worst of it! Clinging to the principles, habits and manners of her youth, she was completely out of sympathy with all modern ideas; if it had been in her power she would have ordered the clock to stand still, and would have repudiated every innovation, even those that furthered her own comforts. I never met anyone who stuck so pugnaciously to her old habits and convictions as Mamma; she was ready to defy the whole advancing world.

In later years this attitude isolated her much from the rest of her kind. Being at war against modernism, as years advanced she became more and more of a recluse and remained entrenched in her own fortress where she could live as she would.

One of her peculiarities was her extreme contempt for medicine and anything pertaining to hospitals, doctors or nurses. Of an iron constitution and never ill herself, she treated all medical innovations as "modern fads" that we were quite able to get on without in our days; she repudiated the bacillus theory, disinfectants were obnoxious to her and absolutely taboo in her house. She positively hooted at those who took their temperature, or blood pressure, had themselves auscultated or who followed a regime. It was absurd to put iodine on a cut or make injections against typhoid fever. As to operations, they were simply a sinful interference with Nature such as God had made it. Medicine was never discussed in our home and I set out into life entirely ignorant of its most elementary principles.

But for all that Mamma was very fond of recommending remedies such as phenacetin, aspirin or saliperine, and was indignant if anybody explained that they might be pernicious if not given with discrimination.

In fact Mamma was a chip of the old block, a type now no longer to be found. Autocratic, conservative, hardened against sickness and pain, proud, courageous, uncomplaining, one who held fast to her old ideas and ideals, abhorring progress if it meant change, abhorring sport if it meant bad manners, abhorring emancipation if it meant licence, abhorring free thinking if it meant ignoring religious principles.

Kind, liberal and tolerant with her servants, knowing the family history of each, she would joke and be almost familiar with them, without, however, allowing them to overstep an inch of that distance which separated the castes from each other. Imperial and at the same time democratic, she loved simplicity. Her cupboards full of Russian sables, silks and satins, real lace, marvellous linen, she preferred wearing home-spuns, thick linen and worthless pelts, because those treasures shut away amongst camphor and lavender were part of the put-away Russian splendour, a thing that had no place in her chosen life. No one was better judge or connoisseur of antique furniture, old silver and china, of which she possessed no end, but she would amuse herself buying modern imitations for everyday use. One had sometimes the curious feeling that she was taking a sort of revenge upon former glories and sumptuousness, crushing them underfoot, making a clean sweep of what belonged irretrievably to the past; if with relief or regret it was difficult to guess.

A curious mixture of tyranny and extraordinary kindness, she could undo at a blow years of patience and tolerance by a sudden hard and often unjustified rebuke which one felt that a quite small effort of self-control on her part could have avoided. There was, I think, something of that mysterious Russian irresponsibility in her nature, an elemental exasperation against all things and even against herself, which other nationalities in vain try to understand. There was a fundamental impatience beneath all her virtues, some urge to overthrow, to destroy with open eyes, even what she most appreciated, needed or loved even, an impatience quite inexplicable except to those who knew the very basis of her nature, disciplined to the verge of torture by those who brought her up. It was a kind of rending asunder of bonds that were irksome,

although, even to herself, she had never admitted that they were.

Mamma more than any other being I have ever known would cut off her nose to spite her face!

I must now describe someone else, and on setting out to paint his portrait I feel almost as though I were delving down into the delicious licence of the fairy-story or legend writer who can model his monsters according to unrestricted imagination.

The personage I am about to describe is Duke Ernest of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, our great-uncle, and brother of the Prince Consort of England, whose smug little duchy our father, by family arrangement, was to inherit.

The figure of Queen Victoria's beloved Consort, our grandfather, is well known to most of the world, specially since Lytton Strachey's interesting summing-up of his character, of his good looks, his intelligence, his patience in a situation which needed almost superhuman tact, of the love his wife had for him and of how she mourned for him to the last day of her life. But his elder brother, though he too was a man of vast intelligence and played a rather important political part in Germany round about the seventies, is little known beyond the German frontiers.

Ernest, Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, was a type of sovereign that has quite disappeared from our modern world. (If ever his kind reappears it will be amongst *nouveaux riches* or financial potentates, but not amongst princes, I trow.) He was even in those easier days a curio not often met with, and it is just as well that he should be rare of his kind.

Uncle Ernest was a tyrant, ruthless and indifferent to the feelings of others; he might almost, had I been writing a fairy-tale, have been an ogre, if you can stretch your imagination to conceive an ogre buttoned up into a correct, if old-fashioned, frock-coat, for it was always in a frock-coat that he appeared twice a year to pay our mother his official visit.

Try and picture to yourself an elderly man, over "life-size," heavy, ponderous, but at the same time an old beau, squeezed into a frock-coat too tight for his bulk and uncomfortably pinched in at the waist. A sal-low face marred by liver spots, a lean, waxed moustache curving down

over the corners of his mouth, the ends turning up again. The jaw of a bulldog, the lower teeth protruding far beyond the upper and with a pair of bloodshot eyes alive with uncanny, almost brutal intelligence.

A formidable old gentleman, ceremonious, emphatic and deliberately jovial, admirably counterfeiting a sort of burly geniality. He would appear, top-hat in hand, with lemon-coloured gloves squeezed into its rim and a rosebud in his button-hole. This rosebud was never missing. We children, who were always sent for to assist our mother on these festive occasions, had been trained to bring forward the most solid chair in the room as his abnormal weight would have been detrimental to any lighter form of furniture.

He would sit down, after having laid his top-hat on a table, his knees widely apart, snort, look about him with a roving eye, accepting our timid politeness with loud but absent-minded expressions of approval, chucking us, to our dismay, under the chin, and inevitably exclaiming: "*Ach die herrlichen, die lieben, die süssen Kinder!*"

These periodical invasions of Mamma's drawing-room by the local potentate were looked forward to with a certain fearful enjoyment in which both dread and excitement had their place.

The truth about Uncle Ernest was not known to me in those days, when all *risqué* conversation was strictly kept from our ears, and to us he was simply a rather terrible, but amiable, bulldog-like uncle, who inspired us with both fear and enjoyment, but later all his peculiarities were related to me and they are worth recounting.

For state reasons he had married a certain Princess Alexandrina of Baden, sister of the then reigning Grand Duke. She was a mild lady, perfectly virtuous, perfectly colourless and resembling her sister-in-law, Queen Victoria, only by her unlimited (and in her case) inexplicable adoration of her lord and master.

He treated her with abominable, insulting indifference, and was known all over Germany for his never-ending and often none too dignified amorous adventures.

Because of these peculiarities his court was hardly respectable. It was composed of adventurers who were useful in all sorts of ways perhaps best not too closely inquired into. These rather doubtful gentlemen were married to second-rate actresses of compromised reputation and all sorts of semi-cultured, semi-respectable persons of nondescript types.

Occasionally there were a few intellectuals and artists of real talent, for Duke Ernest was a man of great learning, but these better elements diminished more and more as he advanced in age.

His excesses of course cost him a lot of money, so added to the rest, he was uncomfortably in the hands of very shady money-lenders to whom he was obliged to show a certain consideration which did nothing to heighten the prestige or tone of his court.

Because of this state of affairs my parents avoided any court festivities and there were, I believe, uncomfortable wrangles about this, but all that was so much before my time that only rumours of it reached me long after old uncle's days had passed.

Once a year, however, the old tyrant gave a family dinner at his Castle Kalenberg, a residence somewhat after the style of the Rosenau, but more pretentious and palatial. The Kalenberg was also situated on a hill and has been mentioned once before in connexion with a cake. The Kalenberg cake, however, never appeared on Duke Ernest's table.

For some reason we children were always invited to these yearly repasts. I believe our innocent presence kept the dissolute old gentleman within bounds. Before starting out, we were well coached as to our behaviour and severely enjoined not to have laughing fits, or to give way to any signs of discourteous hilarity however amused we might be.

Uncle Ernest, owing to his bulk, would sit throned far above all his guests, a terrible figure we could not keep our eyes off. Whatever his real feelings may have been, he played to perfection the genial host and would look, with a "haw-haw," round the table like an ogre counting the morsels he would later gobble up, but that he had set out to charm first. Also on these memorable occasions, we were loudly proclaimed "*süsse, herrliche Kinder*," whereupon we would stuff our handkerchiefs into our mouths to keep from guffawing.

I believe that his conversation could be most coloured and interesting, if not always strictly proper, but we were too young then to enjoy it.

Two rows of high silver candlesticks were invariably the chief decoration of his board, the flowers were stiffly arranged and each guest had a small glass with a tight little bouquet in front of his plate. I remember a certain pink flower always to be found in these old-fashioned nosegays, which had an extremely unpleasant odour. When unobserved we would extricate this special bloom from amongst its companions (no

easy feat because of the tightness of the posies) and secretly pass them to each other under the table, which was another occasion for nearly dying of suppressed laughter.

Poor, humble old Aunt Alexandrina sat opposite the tyrant, mutely nodding approval to each word the terrible one spoke.

Dear old Aunt Alexandrina! I remember her as a drooping, sad-looking old lady in shabby black, a large cameo brooch with the effigy of her husband holding together a cashmere shawl, with a flat and stayless body. A weak, grisly beard covered her chin and two kindly bleared eyes protruded above a depressed-looking nose, hopelessly pear-shaped. She had a nervous way of blinking continually which added to the distressed look which was her chief characteristic. A sad old figure, whose one and only love was the terrible old gentleman who treated her as no one else would dare to treat a servant. She too is a type our modern times have done away with, the saddest, most depressed form of the dutiful wife; of man's plaything, servant-maid, victim.

Even in her early youth she must have been wanting in beauty, but defeated, boneless, castaway hunk that she was, she too had a day she loved to remember, a memory that had remained like a shining light. This we discovered when visiting the humble apartment she occupied right up under the roof of the Kalenberg, into which one seldom penetrated. For some unknown reason in their early wedded days the ducal couple had made together an excursion into the desert, a rare undertaking for those times. Dear old Aunt possessed a faded photograph which she cherished beyond all her belongings. She showed it to us that day. The fingers that held the old picture trembled and the always lachrymose eyes shed real tears of emotion when she took it from its sheltered corner and laid it between our hands.

There she stood in a be-crinolined riding-dress with corresponding hat all droops and feathers and with the classical thin little whip in her hand. Beside her, the beloved despot, he too rigged out according to early-Victorian conceptions of sports-clothes. Arrogant, domineering, sure of himself even in that photograph, he was gazing over her head whilst she gazed up into his face with the eyes of an adoring spaniel. As setting, the desert, the classic desert; sand-dunes, vast horizon, a tent, a palm tree and even the picturesque Arab leaning on his over-long gun—there was no faking, it was the genuine thing.

Yes, there she was in the desert, a quite young wife; she had the picture still, pathetic memento of an illusion that, at the moment when she lived it, was to her at least real enough. She too had had her day, that day which she had lived, romantically, under the ardent African sun—desert, tent, palm trees, nothing was missing, not even the illusion of love.

And in her cold old age, relegated to a stuffy little room under the roof because it cost little to heat, she would still sit before it remembering. . . . A whiff from the Rose of the Garden of Eden came to her still. . . . She too had once been young and had dreamed a dream out in the desert at the side of the man who to-day was a dissolute old reprobate, but whom, oh, miracle of the human heart, she still loved.

Duke Ernest was a mighty hunter, even if not “in the sight of the Lord,” of wine, women and song we may add, stags, roebucks and chamois. A great part of his revenue was used to keep up enormous shooting areas and he had beautifully situated shooting-boxes in the four corners of his picturesque little realm. He was surrounded by a horde of gamekeepers and officials of different degrees and with different titles in keeping with their green cloth, for in Germany all *Jäger* are clothed in green.

The old tyrant’s last lady-love was a sister of one of these green-frocked gentlemen who for that reason was in high favour. I only mention this so as to be able to add a last touch to the picture of Aunt Alexandra’s conjugal devotion.

When the despot died at a ripe old age, his excesses having in no wise shortened his days, “serenely full,” the epicure would say: “Fate cannot harm me—I have dined to-day,” his broken-hearted widow took this young woman under her protection and went as far as to declare the little villa her terrible lord had used for his revels with this and other ladies must neither be touched nor inhabited by others, “because it was there that her beloved Ernest had lived such happy hours!” . . .

Greater charity shall be found in no woman. . . .

CHAPTER VIII

EDUCATION AT COBURG

A WORD about our masters. They were of course an important factor in our lives just then, as we were supposed to imbibe all the knowledge necessary for well-educated little princesses, though in those days no complicated instruction such as algebra, the classics, mathematics or philosophy belonged to the programme. I was neither a good nor an eager scholar, preferring all my other occupations to study. I was not ambitious and grudged the time the lesson hours stole from the thousand and one other things I longed to do. Ducky and I took our lessons together. She had decidedly more aptitude for learning than I, was quicker, had a better memory; spelling came easily to her, whilst I never could learn how to spell correctly; even to-day I cannot, so to say, "see" my words, but only the vision of what they represent. For instance, "garden" for me is not just g-a-r-d-e-n, but trees, flowers and fountains, green lawns and shady corners, and only occasionally I wake up with a certain astonishment to discover how the word looks on paper in plain writing.

Sandra, being younger and therefore less advanced, took her lessons alone; she was the slowest of the three. Later on sister Baby was a much better scholar, more ambitious, with more modern conceptions about what a girl ought to know. I was entirely satisfied with geography, history, arithmetic, botany, literature, religion, natural history, painting, French, music and gymnastics; no more complicated knowledge ever attracted me, nor were we aware that our education was of the sketchiest. We had no one to measure ourselves against.

Professor Rieman, our history and geography master, was an earnest, brown-bearded man, the polite, rather formal type of German. We tolerated, without really liking him. He did his best to make us understand the map of the world and remember the names of rivers, towns and mountains, and he tried hard to give us a general idea of history and of how the countries were connected with each other through the ages; how their faces and dimensions changed; which were the funda-

mental events that *must* be remembered, and how one period followed another with its wars, its growth and decline. But my untrained brain was not really receptive and not much remained to me of all the wisdom he tried to impart to us in long and sometimes weary hours when so many tempting voices called to us from beyond our open windows.

Professor Rieman had a son with magnificent musical talent, who is to-day a professional artiste.

Our chosen favourite amongst our professors was Professor Beck. He had a fine head, with an eagle nose, a mop of untidy hair, a deep voice and a sense of humour. On our "school-plan" his lessons were dubbed *Deutsch* which included literature, composition as well as purely grammar and dictation lessons. We liked our lessons with Professor Beck, though his outlook was far beyond ours and he often forgot that he was speaking to two very innocent little simpletons and would run off upon a line of his own, far beyond our mentality; passing his hand absent-mindedly through his mop of unruly brown-grey hair, he would talk and talk, and his eyes no longer saw us, lost as he was in his own visions. He would hold an incisive forefinger along the side of his eagle nose, half shut his eyes and tell us things we did not understand, gladly drawing from the depths of his knowledge, quite oblivious of the two little girls who liked to hear him perorate, but did not even make an effort to follow his flight of thought. Vaguely, however, we understood that he was deeply interesting, had we been really able to understand what he was talking about.

Ducky, though, was fond of arguing out a point, and seldom accepted anything wholesale, but I was an entirely uninteresting pupil, and I am sorry to say that no clever or amusing sayings of mine from those days can be quoted. I had, however, from the first a certain talent for composition and loved to be given a free rein to "invent" my own subject. I also wrote a very good hand. But my memory was entirely untrained; I could, for instance, remember a story but never a date.

I do not think that lessons were as well understood then as they are nowadays. They were not made really *begreiflich*; they were not, if I may so express it, "visual" enough; they did not excite your imagination, nor were you really taught to grasp the meaning, trend or plan of things. The deductions, the reasons why, the gradual logical development of things were not sufficiently put before you. At least that is

what I feel when looking back upon the many hours wasted in learning so little. But it may also have been that, having been kept by our very religious mother so entirely ignorant of all realities, our unploughed minds simply could not receive the seed of knowledge as the very basis of everything was wanting.

Dr. Heim taught us natural history and botany. He was fat and sallow, with pale eyes protruding behind glasses; buttoned up into the classic frock-coat, there was about him a fusty odour of shut windows, stale cigars and unaired clothes that our noses resented, nor were we ever quite sure that we approved of the knowledge he tried to impart to us. We had an instinctive horror of anything describing inner organs, we thought it had an air of butchery about it that was not quite decent, and we were nearly sick when one day, full of enthusiasm, he brought us an ox's eye so as to demonstrate the marvels of the optic organization. No, decidedly we were not of the modern school which unblushingly inquires into every detail of the human mechanism.

Botany was better, it was much more in our line, though I always preferred a flower in its natural form rather than vivisected to explain to us its why and wherefore.

Poor little Professor Neuman, our arithmetic master, had the worst time of all; sums and numbers, additions and subtractions, the rule of three and all the rest of that tortuous category of study was elementally foreign to my somewhat romantic and careless mentality. Professor Neuman's dark chestnut beard was in queer contrast with his china-pink countenance, and when worried he looked almost absurdly pathetic.

Mr. de Schaek, the successor of stout, kindly, complacent Edouard de Morsier of happy Osborne days, was Alfred's second tutor and gave us French lessons. He was an elegant young man who wore spats and well-cut clothes, who was bored with our youth and could not mask his absent-mindedness, for Mr. de Schaek was a Latin from the crown of his head to the tip of his toes, and was in love with the only well-dressed woman in Coburg. This interesting damsel was the daughter of the Herzoglicher Oberstallmeister and had the distracting habit of sallying forth over the Schlossplatz just at the hour of our French lessons. Secretly in sympathy with our enamoured young master, we immediately recognized by his evident signs of disquiet when this hour was approaching. He would get up from his chair, pace the room, one eye

squinting out of the window, whilst he tried to give us our *dictée*. The lady in question interested us also, for she was undeniably chic, and we felt that she was not the sort we should ever get acquainted with, having taken root amongst the "undesirables" of Duke Ernest's court.

Painting and music were taught us by two worthy spinsters of vastly different types: Fräulein Anna Messing and Fräulein Helferich. This last-named really managed to give me a solid basis in the principles of drawing for which I am grateful to this day. Though her style was cramped and old-fashioned, she knew the fundamental rules of her art and the anatomy of a flower even better than the worthy Dr. Heim. She was a caustic, ironical old dame with a sharp nose and advanced social ideas. There was in her the foundation of a real democrat, she was something of a free-thinker, her opinions were independent in an age when it was not the fashion. She bowed down to no class. She was in fact my first contact with the "Vox Populi."

Old Anna Messing, on the contrary, loved all that had to do with royalty, and was well versed in the "Almanach de Gotha"; she had a beak of a nose, hard, glassy blue eyes, and teeth only comparable to those imagined by a Frenchman when portraying the Britisher abroad. But she was angelically patient, taking infinite trouble to initiate me into the mysteries of an art for which I had no talent. None of her energetic "*ein, zwei, drei*," alas, ever taught me to strum even the simplest little tune in time, and when playing duets with sister Ducky I always chose the bass as it was mostly accompaniment instead of tune, and more in keeping with my poor possibilities. This did not mean that I did not love music; on the contrary, it moved me strangely all my life, though my real musical education was given me much later by Carmen Sylva, the old Queen of Roumania. But in those early days I was a hopeless little barbarian in all concerning that most divine of all arts.

Quite above our level was the person to whom our religious instruction was entrusted. To us, religion was a fact, an essential; not a question of theology. We were in those days quite unworthy of any higher or wider explanation of this fact. The Trinity was undiscussable, the Credo was our belief, we pondered not at all over its assertions and we hated to be told that Adam and Eve were symbols and that God had not created the world in six days. Evidently there were differences of

creeds, but that could not be helped; we were Protestants, Mamma was Orthodox, and beyond our inner circle there were Catholics. These went to a church Luther had denounced because he considered it scandalous that in Rome priests should sell tickets for Heaven. This same Luther had, in the Wartburg (or was it in the Feste Coburg, for this prized fortress had also once had the honour of harbouring the great reformer?), thrown an inkpot at the head of the Devil who had come to try and tempt him. The black stain could still be seen on the wall.

Luther was certainly right to denounce Rome and her errors, but it could not be denied that there was a more poetic atmosphere about the Catholic churches, even if they were too crowded with painted saints, than about our reformed ones. Mamma's church was saturated with mystery and gave you inexplicable thrills. The artist within you approved of the icons *à fond d'or*, the incense perturbed your senses, the shut-off altar made you feel that revelations were hidden from your sight. Yes, there was greater mystery in unreformed churches, they attracted you but were alien all the same. There was an honest sincerity about our English hymns and solemn German *Kirchenlieder*; you felt you were on solid ground. But we did not worry our heads about these differences and their meanings; in those days we were only too delighted to leave well alone, and to accept religion as it had been presented to us by our nurses or governesses, and each morning and evening we faithfully said our prayers.

Herr Obersuperintendent Dr. Müller, chief ecclesiastic of Coburg, was a fine old minister, deeply learned and a magnificent preacher. We were in great awe of him and reverently accepted him as a tremendous personality, and tried with all our hearts to follow his expounding of deep truths far too intricate for our undeveloped minds to grasp. Accustomed as we were to the simple, unsophisticated teachings of English country and naval clergy, he somewhat confused our humble conceptions. Like Professor Beck he fascinated us; his words had wings, we liked the music they made, and accustomed to the pulpit he would soar off into spheres where we could not follow him. Spellbound we would listen, full of admiration for his wisdom, but much too shy to ask questions or confess when we did not understand. Our assenting silence led him to believe that we were absorbing all his teachings, whilst in reality he was confusing our conceptions, even to a certain degree sow-

ing the seeds of doubt in our souls. We venerated him, we admired him, but we never digested his lessons, and I remember how in instinctive self-defence I would allow my brain to become protectingly hazy and safely unreceptive; all unconsciously trying to save my old landmarks, subconsciously understanding that my mind was not yet ready for his deeper teachings which were expounded in a language beyond our years.

He did, however, lead us to our Confirmation, which we approached with a spirit of deep if somewhat unenlightened fervour. We tried to feel and realize the solemnity of the act and to be worthy of the vows we were taking. But right within my inner conscience I had the shocked sensation of not having felt the full thrill of its mystic importance.

It was never given to me to experience any deeper religious ecstasies. Marvellous music, or a perfect communion with Nature could make me realize God most profoundly; a magnificent view, a deep forest silence, a flower-filled garden, a glowing sunset, the sight of a storm at sea, gave me a clearer conception of the eternal than any religious ceremony. The rites one had to go through with a priest as mediator for me always lacked something; he was too much of the earth earthy, with gestures become too familiar and uninspired by repetition; he never gave me that contact with the great Omnipotence which I felt lived more really in my soul than in any church ritual, or any words of man.

This long preparation and those complicated theological explanations of what I had formerly accepted as facts had made me feel slightly uncomfortable, almost a little resentful; subconsciously, no doubt, but there was a sensation of void somewhere, almost as of having lost something. I know that Ducky, who was being confirmed with me, also felt this, but an inexplicable shyness kept us from confiding in each other and discussing a subject which was more one of feeling than of expression, but I knew that she was undergoing the same rather bewildering experience.

With all our might we tried to hypnotize ourselves into a sort of religious ecstasy, a sort of closer contact with the beyond, but neither of us experienced the real inner thrill which, I believe, is given to some.

We were confirmed in the delightful little village church of Oslow near the Rosenau, a rustically rococo building, whitewashed and simple, with a high, dark and tiled roof. The ancient bell had a solemn voice,

the simple congregation was full of fervour, and all those who crowded to church that day, highborn or lowly, were well-wishers, people who loved the two sisters making their first conscious vows before the altar. It was the season of the *Narcissus Poeticus*, the season when the earliest flowers bloom. The chapel was full of them, they were strewn under our feet as we advanced towards the altar, they were bound in great bunches to the pillars, and ever will the pungent, rather heady perfume of those white, star-shaped flowers with their dish-like yellow centres, remind me of that charmingly simple ceremony in that quaint and seldom visited village church.

The text given me for my supposedly conscious entry into life was: "Blessed are the pure of heart for they shall be called the children of God."

On that day also Mamma presented me with four beautiful rows of pearls, with a ruby and diamond set clasp which her mother had left me for this occasion, as she too in her youth, as Princess of Hesse, had been confirmed in a Protestant Church before she became Russia's Empress and changed her faith.

Amongst the many lessons given us were dancing lessons, and these were delightful occasions for forgathering with our friends, as it was no good having dancing lessons without partners.

The pale, eager, nervous little man who instructed us in this elegant art happened to be a brother or cousin of our cook, with the name of Reinhart if I remember rightly. He gave himself infinite trouble and we enjoyed ourselves immensely but could never be induced to take this, in those days somewhat stiff and ceremonious art, very seriously. *Valse à trois temps*, polka, *schottische*, mazurka, gallop, quadrille and lancers, were the dances the desperate, white-gloved, perspiring little martyr tried to teach us.

Amongst Alfred's friends was a terribly funny fellow called Reinhold Ribbeck, rather impertinent but full of gaiety. Ribbeck amused me more than was considered seemly, but somehow one always managed to take a fancy to those of whom the authorities disapproved. I also remember Ribbeck as chief organizer of the bat chases up in the Rosenau loft.

One of our great games at that time was "Christenvervolgung"—

inspired by the lessons upon Church History we were just plodding through. To make our games drastic and realistic we underwent no end of torment, allowing ourselves to be bound up to trees and let down by a rope into a ruined little tower at the end of the Rosenau terrace, where we would remain imprisoned till those who represented the Christians came to deliver us. We made a lot of noise and got very hot, and the games generally ended with a huge tea under the maple tree, Mamma presiding over a damp-haired, dishevelled company of young ruffians with glowing cheeks and tremendous appetites. Nothing gave Mamma more pleasure than to see the young eat to their heart's content, and enormous quantities of cakes, bread and butter, as well as strawberries and cream, were provided on these occasions. *Topfkuchen*, *Knüppelkuchen*, *Sandtorte*, and *Waffeln* were some of the most cherished delicacies, and they did indeed taste delicious out there under the old maple tree with Mamma encouraging you to stuff to your heart's content.

Life at Coburg and at the Rosenau was much less agreeable when Mamma was absent, which she often was in those days, either in Russia or in England, generally taking sister Baby with her, and we then fell irrevocably under the sway of Fräulein and Dr. X.

Fräulein was nice-looking and "a pleasant-spoken lady" as the steward's room would have expressed it, so the inevitable happened. Dr. X. fell in love with her and they became engaged.

Love has different effects upon different people. In this case it had the effect of making the two enamoured ones see perfection in each other, but none in their pupils. Besides, it was considered expedient for us to learn some of the unpleasanter sides of life. This belonged to their system of education. According to them we had, up to the present, had far too easy a time of it.

We had been brought up to the luxuries and comforts of a well-organized and wealthy English home; now we were severely taken in hand to learn that life was not always nor everywhere so easy and agreeable. We were to get accustomed to German manners, ideas, tastes. Reforms were to be introduced and Fräulein set about to upset all that we had hitherto loved and counted upon.

For some reason, although a lover of fine clothes and elegance herself, she persuaded Mamma that it would be good for us to learn to wear

ugly clothes and harsh linen instead of the fine underclothing we had been accustomed to ever since our supremely refined English nursery days. So nightgowns as well as underwear were suddenly changed into others of coarse calico that irritated our sensitive and pampered skins. Besides, she quickly spotted that we all, and I in particular, were keenly attracted by lovely colours, pretty stuffs and becoming dresses, so it was considered necessary to extirpate this tendency towards self-indulgence by making us wear humiliatingly ugly gowns, hats and cloaks, badly shaped shoes—in fact anything that could “uglify” us in any way.

This was acute torture, and we resented these innovations with an exasperated but silent indignation that the lady in question, we were sure, divined and gloated over.

She had a hateful way of showing us up to our mother in our most unattractive light. Girls of that age are anyhow at their worst, and parents have to be patient with them; but Fräulein found ways of ridiculing and humiliating us before Mamma in a thousand small, treacherous and destructive ways. She also encouraged and stimulated any petty jealousies amongst us, and it was only our real love and sympathy for each other which kept us loyal friends and companions.

The more I think about Fräulein’s methods the more do I condemn them. There was something Iago-like about her, insinuating and almost perversely sly. She would, for instance, lead us on by equivocal conversation to ask questions about the hidden mysteries of life and would then show us up to Mamma as nasty little girls with unhealthy minds, whilst it was *she* who was trying to stir us up out of the somewhat torpid but paradisiacal innocence in which Mamma desired to keep us. It was hateful treachery and had Mamma been able to see through it, she would have been incensed. But this clever couple had entirely insinuated themselves into Mamma’s confidence and good graces and we were never given a hearing, whilst all unkind little stories about us and all belittling of our virtues were believed.

Besides, Dr. X. stimulated Mamma’s criticism of English things in a way that finally did much harm.

But all this belongs now to past history and I am not going to rake it up, and if I have mentioned it at all it is only because it did much to disturb, if not actually to sadden the last three years of my life at home.

Of course we were growing up and, having lost the charm of child-

hood, were no doubt often provoking, but it was a critical age and I am sure that had Mamma known Fräulein's *real* character she would not have entrusted us to her care.

One little incident of that time when the two inauspicious authorities were banded together against us must be related, for it is humorous.

Mamma had left for Russia, and the not-yet-married couple were "mooning" together, inspiring us with the boredom with which we probably inspired them; there was a feeling of non-sympathy on both sides.

From time immemorial, for all unofficial occasions, a large silver cup filled with flowers, or a plant, had occupied the centre of the dining-table. This cup, well polished and set English-wise on a small, dark blue velvet pedestal, was of a certain height, hiding your *vis-à-vis*. In Mamma's absence Fräulein took the head, Dr. X. the foot of the table, and being in love, this silver, flower-filled vase prevented the engaged couple from seeing each other during the meals. They stood this impediment for some time, but one day Dr. X., in that high-handed way of his, ordered the servant to remove the cup from off the table. Irritated as we were against a tyranny we accepted from necessity and not from choice, our accumulated resentment found in this sudden outlet, and all four of us raised a loud protest; this pot had been put on the table by Mamma, it was her desire that it should be there and it was she alone who had the right to have it removed; during her absence we did not admit of its being touched; it was a tradition, we could not bear to sit at the table without it, etc. etc. . . . In fact we made a hell of a row.

At first the irate Dr. X. tried to laugh away our resistance, endeavouring to show us how foolish we were and how absurd our objections. All in vain! We had at last found firm ground under our feet; here was an occasion when we could score over the oppressor and we intended to maintain our position. Finally, completely exasperated, the angry gentleman burst out: "Well, it is either I or the pot!"

Oh, dangerous words! For at that, sister Ducky, at all times the "fore-fighter," stretched out both arms, clasping the offending vase to her heart, and glaring over it at our brother's tutor, loudly declared: "We prefer the pot!"

Dismay in the ranks of the enemy who, to save his face, had only one

thing to do after this, to get up and leave the table, which he did with as much dignity as the absurd situation allowed him to muster. It need not be added that the rest of the meal was a somewhat silent and gloomy affair in an atmosphere made freezing by Fräulein's resentful disapproval.

The misguided couple finally married, and whilst they were on their honeymoon, Fräulein's eldest sister came to look after us, a somewhat aged spinster whom we for some reason called "Louiserowitch."

Louiserowitch had evidently no great love for her younger sister and little by little she wormed out of us all our complaints against Fräulein and Dr. X. which we had up to then kept to ourselves. It happened just then that Papa spent a week with us at the Rosenau during Mamma's absence, an event which seldom came to pass. We soon discovered that the high-and-mighty airs of Dr. X. and above all his anti-British attitude were a thorn in Papa's flesh; and encouraged by the unloving elder sister we raised our voices in complaint against our dual oppressors, thus at last unloading our heavy hearts to our parent.

I believe that a great row ensued. Papa was only too delighted to discover that his children resented the couple he himself detested and I believe that both were for a moment in danger of being dismissed.

This event, however, did not take place. How matters were patched up I do not know, but Mamma, who still believed in them, somehow obtained their absolution, and they were re-installed and were, alas, allowed to continue their rule, less ruthlessly perhaps, but none the less effectually, though a velvet glove disguised part of their tyranny.

I have forgotten in what form reconciliation with their pupils came about, but our quarrel was somehow patched up with concessions on both sides. The acute epoch of war was over, but a certain feeling of mutual distrust was never quite got over. Mamma behaved with extraordinary tact and did not, as far as I can remember, reproach us for our denunciation; but Louiserowitch, the instigator, was no more invited to the house. I have often wondered since what old score she can have had to pay off against her younger sister by having thus encouraged us to give voice to our complaints.

Alas! we were growing up, there was no denying it! Our dresses

were getting longer and longer and there was no "Captain dear" to soften any shocks with the authorities. We were now in less loving hands that were only too glad to show us up; there was no longer that atmosphere of love and good understanding in the house. Power over us had been given to those who magnified our faults and minimized our virtues, and the farther we advanced along this prickly (not to say thorny) road (which I suppose would be an exaggeration), the more did Malta, when looking back upon its delights, appear like the Garden of Eden, out of which we had been driven for ever. Fräulein, in spite of our revolt, still held sway over our wardrobe and it was still considered good for our morals to clothe us as unbecomingly as possible, with true German want of taste.

Fräulein, the moment she spotted which was the pattern of stuff we most disliked, would choose it for us with a sort of evil delight. Thus do I remember a certain loathsome green, yellow-streaked check, which was inflicted upon us. I always abhorred checks and this one was the most offensive imaginable. If Fräulein meant to humiliate us she had certainly succeeded, for this abominable attire was indeed a mortification of the flesh; besides, the stuff, being good and strong, never wore out. Revolt filled our hearts each time we had to appear in these dresses; and what was worse, the treacherous lady used to warn our mother that we were incensed over the indignity of our costume and Mamma would make remarks upon it, asking us if we were not pleased with "those charming dresses," which was adding insult to injury.

We were allowed to go to the theatre twice a week, on Thursdays, I think, and Sundays, because there, unlike England, Sunday was the great day for theatre-going. This we loved.

The Coburg theatre was a self-righteous little institute, full of its own importance and, of course, called "das Hoftheater," as all things in those days centred round the court, and the court gave it a large yearly subsidy. The public, however, was exacting and wished to see every sort of performance, so there was not only grand opera and operettas, but also comedies, tragedies and classical pieces. Luckily there was no prejudice against the theatre for children; it was quite rightly considered educational. Of course all *risqué* and not absolutely proper pieces were severely excluded from our programme, but we were initiated into

Schiller, Goethe, Shakespeare, Wagner, Bizet, Rossini, Mozart, Verdi, Meyerbeer, Donizetti and what-not else, because no opera was too ambitious for the Coburg stage. We were still at the age when we preferred opera, tragedy and classics rather than comedy, but Mamma loved *Lustspiele* and could laugh heartily.

Terrible old Uncle Ernest was much addicted to the theatre in every form and when in town was always to be seen in his small box quite near the stage, whence his phenomenal bulk rose almost threateningly from a chair specially constructed to accept and bear his abnormal weight. We would look over towards him from where we sat, rather as one would peep at the cage of the most formidable animal in a menagerie. In the long *entr'acte*, we would be taken over to say good evening to him and would generally find him smoking a strong and very black cigar. Here too he would receive us with the usual exclamations of loud good-will and we would stare fascinated at this unusual specimen of humanity to which we could never get quite accustomed.

We heard whisperings about his interest in such and such a lady of the stage; but in those days that sort of talk went in at one ear and out at the other, it meant nothing to us. We too had our favourite actors and actresses, so why should not the terrible old Duke also have his preferences?

Our special favourite was a baritone called Bütner, who was at the same time an excellent actor and the days when he sang were red-letter days. He was a perfect Hans Sachs, Rigoletto, Toreador, Barber of Seville, Don Juan, first-class as Amonasro in *Aida*, enchanting as Wolfram von Eschenbach in *Tannhäuser*. Besides serious opera, he had several delightful parts in operettas, especially in one called *Don César*, where he impersonated a very gay adventurer and sang an irresistible valse then very much in vogue: "*Komm herab, O Madonna Theresa*," which was one of those tunes that once heard you could never get out of your head. This, with Strauss's "*Rosen aus den Süden*," I vainly tried to strum on the piano under Fräulein Messing's energetic *ein, zwei, drei!* But in spite of her courteous optimism I never came to the end of either.

The tenors were generally fat and uninspiring and far from being the ideal heroes they were supposed to represent; Lohengrin especially was each time a bitter disillusionment, indeed he never came up to the mark.

Once we had a great pleasure: a troop of Tyrolese peasants from Chimsee came to play *Oberbayerische Stücke*, local peasant plays, in their own dialect with song and dance. They were first-rate actors and their various representations were a real pleasure; besides, the pieces they played were most touching; taken from everyday peasant life, they were full of simple sentiment which took hold of your heart and stirred your emotions.

On later visits home after my marriage, the Coburg Hoftheater, which at certain seasons migrated to Gotha, the second capital of the Duchy, still played a great part in our lives and had some first-rate actors whom we much admired, but this will be told in due season.

Anyhow, the theatre was a pleasant way of adding to our instruction as many a classic passed thus before our eyes. Schiller's *Jungfrau von Orleans* was our prime favourite; we also had a weakness for *Die Räuber*, as also we were fascinated by Goethe's *Egmont*, and, a little later, *Torquato Tasso*.

Our favourite operas were *Carmen*, *Der Fliegende Holländer*, *Tannhäuser*, and *Die Africanerin*, this last-named because our much-admired Bütner played a great part in it as a slave who loved the heroine who, of course, loved some one else. In the last act this interesting lady and the unselfish slave both died by inhaling the poisonous scent of some red flowers falling from an enormous tree which covered half the stage.

The Coburg staging was excellent and these deadly flowers fell most naturally from the tree. What was less natural was that the exhausted and broken-hearted heroine took much longer about dying than the vigorous slave. This, however, was no fault of the stage manager, but because the lady had a longer and more important part to sing. On the demise of the one he had so unselfishly and hopelessly adored, our favourite expired without much more ado, the poisonous blossoms killing him much more rapidly than the delicate damsel. He made a most dramatic exit from this life, his face pressed against the feet of his love. *We wept!*

There was also a magnificent shipwreck in that same opera, most realistically managed by that small theatre.

The decorations of the Coburg stage were quite celebrated because of a remarkable local artist named Brückner, who also had the honour of

painting the scenery for *Parsifal*, in those days only played at Bayreuth.

The operatic and classical pieces were remarkably staged at Coburg because of this artist, but the *Lustspiele* and modern *Schauspiele* were less successful in this respect, the actresses being too poor to dress well, nor was the German taste very good in the staging and arrangements of pieces taking place *dans le grand monde*.

Later, when we were married, it was our joy occasionally to send some of our smart dresses to the actresses who had to play elegant parts.

One charming memory is of a visit to the Passion Play at Oberammergau. On this occasion Dr. X. was at his best. He could be a charming and gay companion when no obstacles crossed his path, when he was sole leader, and he had no other will to subject, no one to ridicule or belittle. He had *un fond de poésie*, to be found in most Germans, be it in their love for a Christmas tree, for Andersen's fairy tales, or for a *Fusstour* through forests and over mountains. Even the most learned and "Kultur-conscious" German has a simple side if you can get at it; and it is most easily got at when he is away from those he wants to crush by his superior knowledge and his desire to master and tyrannize. On this excursion into the beautiful Bavarian mountains, amongst delightful, simple, warm-hearted peasants who lived for the tradition of this great "Mystery Play," they gave every ten years, Dr. X. put off all aggressiveness and became the most pleasant of cicerones.

There are some who can only enjoy things when they are leading, that is to say, when others are being introduced to something which they have propounded, discovered or sanctioned, whilst they have neither patience nor interest for anything into which another is trying to initiate them. They are then at once ready with their irony and their desire to belittle or ridicule; they cannot stomach any success another may be having; it immediately breeds in them a spirit of opposition and instinctive resentment; they must be lording it over others or their very existence has no further value.

Such was Dr. X. But when all was smooth sailing, meaning that there was no one who in any way challenged his right to be the all-knowing, all-powerful, all-discovering, all-leading, then all was well; he was then full of good humour, fun, jokes and charity towards mankind.

This Passion Play, which these simple mountain folk have enacted for I do not remember how many decades, is the principal reason of their existence. It is their great pride and they look upon it as a sacred mission conferred upon them, for which they must always keep themselves worthy. Even in everyday life each man goes about with the face of the part he is playing, either one of the Twelve Apostles, of Pilate, Caiaphas, Herod, the Centurion, of Mary Magdalen, of the Virgin, the Jews of Jerusalem. Wigs and paint are taboo, so all through the ten years separating the Passion Plays from each other, they prepare their type, letting their hair or beards grow according to what they are to impersonate.

Their houses are indicated as "Christ's house," or "St. John's," "St. Peter's" or "the Virgin Mary's."

As it happened we lived in the house of the Virgin Mary, the daughter of a simple peasant who kept the modest inn at which we put up. She was a noble-faced woman with the right expression for a Mater Dolorosa.

To play the part of the Saviour was of course the supreme honour, and the one elected as such had to be worthy of that honour in every way, not only as to face but also in his everyday life. If I remember rightly the Christ of that particular play was a carpenter, which added to the proper atmosphere. The one of to-day, as I have been told by a friend who lives in Oberammergau, is a potter, and my friend even sent me some delightful bowls and jugs which he had modelled.

The play impressed us deeply and the whole spirit of the village was wonderful and uplifting; besides, the place itself was beautiful and the spring meadows one mass of marvellous wild flowers. Dr. X. being in the right mood, knew how to heighten and accentuate the meaning of it all most skilfully, so that this particular excursion stands out in my memory as something very impressive and worth while, rather, in fact, like a vision out of another and purer world breaking in upon everyday life.

Also in this German household of ours, certain servants played a special part. There was Wiener, our nursery and schoolroom footman, and old Matilda the housemaid, Rose, our brother's servant, Schaub the *Stallmeister*, and Meister, the Rosenau castellan.

Wiener I have already spoken of in connexion with the Kalenberg cake. He outlasted nearly everybody and finally became sister Baby's factotum. He looked after her with a mixture of a nurse's care and paternal indulgence, but like a parent he could also occasionally scold her; he admired, adored and humoured her and was respectful and familiar all in one. The only thing that in his long career he never attained to was elegance of line. He was brick-coloured, underset, with a protruding upper lip which always seemed to resent having been shaved, and had also a comfortable paunch which did not decrease with years. He died during the War, I believe, but I never heard if his figure had modified towards the end, during those lean years when rich and poor alike were often underfed, more especially so in Germany for all their having so heroically denied themselves till they reached the very end of their tether.

Wiener had learned a certain amount of English which he mixed up with German, producing thereby a gibberish which was as good as a play. Having an opinion of his own about most things, he was incredibly outspoken and generally hit the nail on the head. His laugh was queer but catching and pleated his "homely" face into many folds. But old Wiener was true-blue for all his want of distinction.

In the days of our childhood he was continually at war with Matilda the housemaid, as their two authorities often clashed, and their love for us made them jealous of each other. Matilda was called "old Matilda" even when she was young. Looking back upon her, I realize that she had a very handsome face but not of the kind children admire; she was of the strong, healthy, peasant type and had been left a widow very young with a son whom she lived for and adored. Matilda had none of an English housemaid's elegance and never tried to modify her square, rather rustic appearance. Her love for the royal children was her very reason of existence, and her indulgence towards our caprices knew no bounds. She too learned an English-German jargon which she used freely, especially when squabbling with Wiener.

In our eyes one of her chief virtues was that each Sunday morning on awakening us she would appear with some excellent biscuits peculiar to Coburg; they were of several kinds and each of us had our favourite. My preference went to a sort of thin, round shortbread of a goodly size glazed over with a transparent covering of sugar flavoured with

lemon. She also occasionally produced a marvellous, sticky white sweet cut into oblong strips about the length of a finger. These were dry to the touch but if absolutely fresh had, when pulled, a way of lengthening exceedingly. This exquisite sweetmeat was called "*Lederzucker*" (Leathersugar) and is recommended only to those whose teeth are really their own. She also had a mysterious way of producing "sour milk" by shutting up a small bowl of milk in a cupboard. I for one, though, could never touch sour milk.

Coburg would not have been Coburg without Matilda, but I am sorry to have to relate that, some time before I left the old home, Matilda did not entirely live up to her title of "old Matilda," but finally proved she was still young in a way which was carefully kept from our innocent ears, and to our grief was removed from the nursery on the pretext of ill-health. What her most natural malady had been I only learned much later when I had children of my own.

Rose was indeed well-named. His face was one broad, pink and white bloom. He was hugely tall and heavy and possessed the biggest hands and feet ever seen; his countenance was like a smiling full moon. He began as Alfred's valet and looked after him as though he were a baby, humouring his every fad when at eighteen he became a lieutenant and, like all members of that species, was immensely particular about the height of his collars, the length of his sword, the fit of his trousers, the cut of his tunic. Rose smiled at all this but obeyed orders without flinching. He was, finally, a wonderful nurse when Alfred's health broke down and it was Rose's enormous hands that laid him at last in his coffin at the too early age of twenty-four . . . but this tragic event belongs to a later date.

Rose was created to be the confidential family servant. When poor Alfred had left us, Rose became Mamma's page and finally, during the War, her steward, and was with her still when she died. He has now remained to look after the old Coburg home for my sisters. I have not seen him for many years, so I do not know if his face is still rubicund and rotund as formerly, but I suppose years of grief and privation must have left traces even upon his optimistic countenance, so it is better perhaps that I should remember him as he was, than see him as he is to-day!

Schaub, the head of the stables, was an imposing non-commissioned

officer of martial appearance. He was a man of "opposition," and the only way of obtaining anything from him was to present our request the wrong way round.

But of all those in our service Meister, the Rosenau "castellan," was the most unique. He was, in fact, a great "original," even a bit crazy, I think. He was for ever inventing something or discovering things, having a clever way of unearthing antiquities in the most unexpected places; each time we came to the Rosenau he had some new find to show us. Mamma, much amused by Meister's absurdity, encouraged his grotesque eccentricities. His face was indescribable; it was round and happy with queer, shiny red spots on nose and cheeks, and his razors certainly were not up to their task. His eyes were small and shy, his nose was snub and inquisitive, and he had one tooth much longer than its companions which made itself indiscreetly evident when he talked, and his hair was always standing on end. A comic figure indeed!

Whenever we arrived at the Rosenau we would hear Meister stumbling hastily down the twisting tower staircase and then out he would rush, full of news and quaint stories, gesticulating with his arms, excitedly relating his latest discoveries and exploits. He had a funny, stumpy way of walking which made his head nod as though eternally expressing agreement; there was something absurdly childish about his walk, as though he were always stumbling over his own toes.

He was occasionally rebellious and had none too good an opinion of his neighbour. Complaint was part of his daily bread; besides, Meister had a chronic grievance, he imagined that he had missed his real vocation, which should have been that of a tenor. Yes, Meister believed that he had a beautiful voice, and would delight us by standing in the middle of the lawn singing Verdi's most passionate arias, especially that of the Troubadour, his great favourite, which would be accompanied by expressive gestures he considered in keeping with the words: "*Du meine Seele, Du mein Glück . . .*" I can still hear and see him, and Mamma laughing to her heart's content, outside in the sunshine before the house. This was all long, long ago, and belongs to days when life seemed easy, *was* easy, in fact, for us at any rate.

By degrees I believe Meister's poor opinion of his neighbour took the form of cantankerousness; an ever-increasing love for the bottle may have been responsible for his diminishing charity towards others. He

sang no more love arias, and the shiny spots on cheeks and nose spread alarmingly all over his face. His patient wife became a victim of his ill-humour. She had formerly believed in his unrecognized genius, had humoured his extravagances and cooked him many a good meal. Had she with age become a less good cook? I was not there to investigate; but the fact remains that Meister became ever more sulky and finally quite impossible, so that his wife had reason to regret that he was not an everyday mortal. Always a bit cracked, I suppose the crack had become a leak. Anyhow, Meister was removed from the Rosenau and another man resembling him in size, but younger and uncracked, was put in his place. But this was after my time.

Many years later my sisters told me that there certainly seemed to be something peculiar about the Rosenau's influence upon its guardians, as Meister's follower also became a bit of an original with time. Had the unrecognized tenor left some germ in his wake? I cannot say, but although several eccentricities were mentioned I believe the gap-filler never took either to song or to the bottle, which was fortunate for himself and for others, and especially for his wife.

Meister had been patron and promoter of certain little huts we built ourselves amongst the trees just below the *Schloss*. Hidden away from the road these little buildings were our great delight.

All through my life I have had a real passion for building wee houses or huts. It is the nesting instinct I think. All through the years large houses have been put at my disposal, palaces, villas, castles, but something within me always drove me to construct tiny, odd little habitations which allowed me to give way to my imagination and that queer urge within me to create; create something exactly according to my own taste and ideas, no matter how humble, how small, how absurd, how unorthodox. I had this urge as a child and carried it out into life with me where later on it also became the joy of my own little ones. Mamma's little houses played a happy part in their lives. It is only in these last years that I have been able to indulge more completely in this passion; my huts have grown larger, have even become goodly sized habitations, but each time I begin them with that same impetus, that same spirit of adventure as when building that first hut at the Rosenau. My imagination runs away with me and I see visions before me, castles in

the clouds, and yet some have materialized into dear little cottages upon earth.

It was Ducky and I, the inseparable chums, who built this first hut in the Rosenau thickets, and it was actually made out of a cupboard. It was the imaginative Meister who helped us to plan it and carry it out. It was also Meister who secured the cupboard. It was roomy, worm-eaten and somewhat decrepit, but the aria-singer beautified it with a gable and actually fixed up a bell with a horseshoe hanging from its rope for good luck. Ducky and I dyed our cupboard grass-green and painted a large heart on its door. The paint ran whilst we were painting so that our heart became a bleeding heart! The too great solemnity of this crimson emblem was, however, relieved by small bunches of daisies and four-leaved clover leaves painted as border to the door. At that time we were over-ready with brush and paint, principally inspired by certain quaint peasant furniture Meister had unearthed for us in the villages around.

Needless to say, there was not much space in our hut, besides, the branch of a tree passed through it; from this branch we suspended a miniature cauldron, but the hut was too diminutive for a fireplace, which was our great regret. The cauldron was therefore used rather for flowers than for food. The chain it hung from was thick and heavily coated with rust.

It must be confessed that when it was finished we never quite knew what to do in our hut; the chief joy had been its creation. We finally came to the conclusion that we were waiting . . . But waiting for what? For Fate? Life perhaps? Or Love? . . . Probably! Only we did not know this; but there was a sort of unrest in us, a feeling of expectation as though we must open wide our door with the symbolic crimson sign to some marvellous guest, to someone who would count in our lives, and the vision of many a hero passed before our minds. I do not know if Ducky's visions were the same as mine, for although such fast friends, in character we were very different and we were curiously wordless as to questions of sentiment.

We were painfully shy before any display of feeling. In this we were truly British, the more we felt, the less we showed; of deeper sentiment, I mean, of things pertaining to heart, soul or faith. Minor emotions like anger, impatience, amusement, joyful excitement were given way to

without restraint. We were not unexpressive children and Mamma encouraged us to communicate our impressions, to express our thoughts, our desires, opinions, likes and dislikes; but she herself was more than sober in all her manifestations of deeper feeling; almost too reticent in fact, denying herself any spontaneous demonstration either of love, joy or grief. She always had herself in hand, utterly, and hated anything that might have been termed "sentimentality." She trained us to this attitude and all through life this peculiarity has clung to us four sisters; at moments of deep sentiment or emotion we are disconcertingly dumb.

This has been an asset but also a hindrance in life. In moments of panic and consternation it stood me in good stead, kept me cool-headed, enabled me to become a leader, an adviser when others were losing their heads; but it made me suffer at times when I longed to show my sympathy, love or affection, because then I become inarticulate, outwardly stiff and disappointingly undemonstrative; I become almost wordless at moments of great emotion.

Later on, living in a Latin country, I learned to shed some of that outward stiffness which was quite misunderstood and often taken for pride, sometimes even for heartlessness, and which seemed in many ways so out of keeping with my otherwise impulsive, unguarded attitude towards life.

I was born confident, with a ready belief in others. I am naturally impulsive and unsuspicious. I easily express in words what I feel and never try to be sly, clever or circumspect with others; I have no defence against the deceitful, it never comes naturally to me to believe that anyone wants to cheat me or take me in. Almost dangerously outspoken myself, I cannot imagine that others can deliberately set about being treacherous and insincere. On the whole I have got through life none too badly in spite of my ingrained rashness; there were no doubt occasions when others made their profit out of it, but for all that I feel like proclaiming loudly that, in the long run, "honesty is the best policy," and thereby I stand.

Sister Sandra, who had a truly touching way of always imitating her elders, very naturally also desired to possess a hut, and permission was given to her to have a little house built for herself, just below ours.

This second construction was less primitive, became in fact a wee cottage with a thatched roof and real brick walls, and had room for several bits of furniture which were mostly designed and carried out by Sandra's closest friend, Gretchen Gazert.

This leads me over into the chapter upon friends. Being a large family, we were on the whole self-sufficient and there was no absolute need for close friendships. But Ducky and I, the inseparables, were inclined to leave Sandra, who was two years younger, rather out in the cold, so, sister Baby being too small, she very naturally wanted someone with whom to share her possessions. This was the reason for Gretchen Gazert's entry into our lives; and Gretchen, having once entered them, came to stay.

How well I remember Gretchen's first appearance. She was the purest specimen of the Germanic type, flaxen, blue-eyed, plump, rosy, sweet-tempered, modest, just a little shy. She was accompanied by a pet lamb beautifully washed and combed and smartened up with pink ribbons. Gretchen and her lamb were curiously suited to each other, they even almost resembled each other, and Gretchen was smiled upon by a broad and very loving mother who, when a little girl, must have looked very much like Gretchen did then. Frau Medezinalrat Gazert completed the picture. She was exactly the sort of mother Gretchen had to have. And the Gazert house was one of the most hospitable in town; no one made such good cakes and biscuits, dumplings and *Krapfen* as Frau Gazert; besides Gretchen, she also had two grown-up daughters and several sons; Dr. Gazert was her second husband and was a good deal older than she was.

Everybody was busy, smiling, happy and prosperous in the Gazert home, and besides being renowned for its excellent cooking, it was also known as a centre where all minor arts were encouraged: wood-carving, carpentry, poker-work, embroidery and what-not—the Gazerts were always doing or inventing something, or launching a new idea. Gretchen very quickly became indispensable in our circle and has remained so all through the long years. Gretchen is the born friend and helper; unselfish, discreet, modest, self-sacrificing, faithful, devoted, and a hard worker such as is seldom met with.

Life has buffeted her, the War has ruined and made of her a widow, fate has tried her in every way, but Gretchen has remained staunch, un-

beatable in her desire to serve, to help, to love, to give; it was therefore her right to be named first and foremost when speaking of friends.

Ducky and I, although inseparable, did not entirely escape that period in life when girls give way to a certain *schwärmerei*, when a certain amount of incense is bound to be burnt. Sisters may love each other, but their love is never blind, nor particularly flattering, nor does it wear a bandage over its eyes. Therefore for a time we each had a bosom friend who supplied all the adoration with which our healthier love for each other never provided us. These were innocent little infidelities, little side-plays which but strengthened our loyalty towards each other.

Ducky's bosom friend was a certain Frieda von Lichtenberg, a somewhat "high-flown" girl full of poetry whose elder sisters flirted with the Coburg officers; and mine was Margaretha von Hanecken, daughter of the major commanding the Coburg battalion. Margaretha was more stolid than Frieda, but none the less *schwärmerisch*, but in friendship, as in deeper passion, there is nearly always the one who loves and the one who lets herself be loved and I must confess that Margaretha did three-quarters of the adoring whilst I accepted her devotion with an ease that I am thoroughly ashamed of when I look back.

She had the real German faculty of beautifying her idol, so Margaretha was able to make me feel that I was indeed a very wonderful being, born to be adored.

Margaretha loved to clasp my hand in the dark, to steal the roses I wore in my girdle, to gaze at the stars, her arm around my neck, to read me poetry and to exchange rings; but to be entirely truthful I never really cared for this sort of sentimentality, I rather submitted to it than took an active part, but was all the same flattered that I could inspire anybody with such glorious, high-flown feelings. Although we remained much less closely in touch than with Gretchen, this friendship lasted many years, as Margaretha was a dear and faithful woman, she too becoming an officer's wife. But years loosened the link, I saw little of her later, and she gradually faded out of my life because of distance and the passing of years. Her husband was also killed during the War.

Ducky's friendship with Frieda was brought to a more abrupt close, the authorities considering that her society was not particularly beneficial; I think the elder sisters had something to do with this!

Friendships at that critical age are certainly not easy to direct or control, it needs a light hand for those at the wheel, and I do not think that Fräulein was a very efficient steersman, for she cared for herself too much and for us not enough. This, however, may be an unfair criticism, for having had daughters of my own I know how difficult is the friendship question.

Another difficulty was, of course, our brother's friends; this particular sort of complication is, I think, inevitable in the life of every girl who has a brother. Inevitably certain preferences arose, a certain pairing off, certain passing infatuations, innocent enough but which nevertheless had to be kept watch over. We were growing up, and our hearts were expanding together with the lengthening of our limbs, expanding in such a way that they felt empty unless at least partly filled by some sentimental interest; so it was quite naturally Alfred's associates who supplied that interest, not because they were in any way particularly handsome, intelligent or wonderful, but because they too were young and awakening to the wonders of life. There was Arend, the dark and mysterious, Löwel, the good-natured giant whom little sister Baby admired, and who blushed like a peony when she slipped her small hand into his; who had two huge dimples which made him look innocent and whose voice was changing so that it had a curious crack in it when he laughed. There was Froman, the supercilious, the best looking of them all and who easily stole the girls' hearts; there was Winter, the nondescript, who was everybody's friend and confidant, but who made no one's heart beat; there was Ribbeck, the clown, always up to tricks, he was the champagne of the company and relieved all situations grown too tense; and finally there was Schultes, the worthy, whom everybody appreciated, but who was no one's "flirt"; names which loomed large and that meant much to us then, but which gradually faded away out of our lives as did the faces attached to them, so that I have to make a slight effort to call them quite back to memory. But when I make that effort I can still review them all and feel like sending them a sign of recognition, a greeting from beyond the long years, a greeting from the days of our youth.

I was the first to leave the old home, and fate carried me off to the farthest end of Europe, so that in my case separation was complete; my

sisters may have followed up their different careers but I was unable to do so . . . I cannot even say which are still of this earth!

Alfred never went to school; he followed the same studies as his comrades, with the same masters, but at home. I think it was a pity he was never sent to school. Many hopes were placed in him and much care was expended upon his education which had been minutely planned and carried out, but I have nevertheless the feeling that many a mistake was made.

Alfred was a sensitive boy; he had a heart of gold, but he had too great an idea of his own importance and was easily led astray. School would have given him his level, taught him the measure of his strength against others, and made him see reality in a different way.

I think that he ought not to have been left so much at the mercy of a man such as Dr. X., who liked to wound his pride and to ridicule him in a way which made our blood boil.

As I was married at seventeen, and my brother was but a year older than I, I really knew him very little and when he was grown up he had almost entirely passed out of my life, though he did come twice to visit me in my new home. He died at the early age of twenty-four, round about the date of my parents' silver wedding, which made it most tragic. This will be related in season, and if mentioned here it is only because my memories of Alfred are of a stripling, eager, blundering, a little swaggering, always getting into trouble, always being scolded. He was gay but easily offended, had keen intelligence but a want of balance.

We four sisters loved our brother, helped to fight his battles for him and furiously resented any slight put upon him. He treated us with that off-handedness characteristic of elder brothers, but he was proud of us when we were grown up.

Somehow I always felt the pathos of Alfred, and felt instinctively that he needed defending; he was always getting into trouble and people did not help him in the right way because they had not the patience to understand him. Ducky and I felt this, subconsciously we *knew* it; but we were too young in those days, too inexperienced, too foolish, too preoccupied with our own joys and troubles to be any actual help.

I must here mention a peculiarity in my character; all through life I have had a potent faculty for pity which has been the undercurrent of

all my actions, the explanation of that blending of strength and weakness which are like dual personalities at war in my being. Latent but insistent, pity lies at the very root of my "ego."

I always saw the pathetic side of the ridiculous or of the angry, the tragic side of the sinner, the sad side of the wicked, and I always sensed the hopeless mistakes made by humans when judging each other. They never seemed to go to the heart of things, to understand the real inner "reason why"; they kept hovering above truth, their verities and explanations were skin-deep; it was as though they were afraid of the trouble and complication *real* understanding would impose. They raised formulas, entrenched themselves behind truisms which gave them a moral basis from which they felt they need not move, and which was a protection against the too violent winds of deeper, sterner reality—God's reality!

Far be it from me to pretend that I had all this clearly in my mind in those young days, that my thoughts could grasp it, my brain understand it, but subconsciously at the roots of my heart lay that deep pity which was really *conscience* and which gave me no peace when there was suffering or injustice of any kind.

Not that pity always made me absolutely just, no, not just with a rod of iron! Pity has more than once led me astray, has made me err on the side of weakness, tempting me to be clement at moments when severity would have saved much future trouble and misunderstanding.

As a child, this enormous pity for all things lay like an oppression on my otherwise gay and carefree heart, and this pity grew and grew and is still growing and to-day it is such a weight that my two hands are not strong enough to lift it. "If I look hard enough at anything in this world it brings tears into my eyes"; the words are not mine but they exactly express what I feel. There are tears beneath everything, and if humanity would understand that there is so much more suffering than real wickedness in the world, they would be kinder to each other, more helpful, less impatient, less indifferent, less critical. But we have no time . . . we hurry, hurry, press forward and do not delve down deeply enough to realize the cause or source whence all the harm, the sadness, the strife comes.

I too hurry, life makes me hurry, humanity makes me rush along with it; I try to go more slowly, to pause, to listen, understand, explain

—but the great wheel is turning and I shall never be able to get to the end of my thoughts, nor be able to say all that I have to say.

Forgive me this digression, I am coming back again to my story.

As before mentioned, Alfred was always getting into trouble; people were too impatient with him and Mamma, hoping to find perfection, was often disappointed in her son. Mamma had a supreme horror of the shady side of life and in every way tried to ignore it, and when for all that, it approached her through any member of her own circle, her grief and indignation were extreme. She was never able to talk with Alfred; she thought that severity and religious principles must keep him straight; he found no mercy when he sinned, so he lost confidence in those who might have helped him, and later, when liberated from Dr. X. and home rule, became secretive, led a double life and made a mess of things. But I had very little to do with that sadder period of his life, he was still an innocent, jolly though somewhat touchy boy whilst I was at home, and we were very happy together. Alfred, though not at all good-looking, had charm and knew how to speak to old and young, high and low; there were the makings of a real prince in him, but fate decreed it otherwise. Although I have many good memories of those years, it was not an entirely happy period, a certain unrest was amongst us, the unrest of young birds feeling their wings grow. We did not know that it was this, but Life was already knocking at the door, looking in at the window, the Fate of each was approaching with inexorable tread.

This unrest also came from the fact that we had several households; one at Coburg, one at Clarence House, London, and one at Devonport where my father had been given some naval command. Our mother therefore had to divide her time between these three, whilst we, most of the year, were obliged to be at Coburg because of our studies.

One charming element had been brought into the house in the person of Fräulein von Passavant, the second governess. She was a delightful young girl and a great refuge when Fräulein made things difficult. Sophie von Passavant remained in my mother's household to the end of her days, becoming later on her lady-in-waiting, and because of her kind, friendly ways, was loved by everyone. She died during the War, a few years before my mother.

I have not yet mentioned one of the great joys of the Coburg life—the skating. The winters could be very cold and there were often several weeks of hard frost. Mamma never skated herself; but she thoroughly enjoyed arranging parties on the Rosenau lake, which was large and curving and the ice kept beautifully smooth. We had the greatest fun on this lake, wild games of hockey, of follow-my-leader, and innumerable other games, all of them exciting, with that small touch of danger about them which added to their charm. As culminating joy Mamma had erected a *montagne Russe*, a sort of iced water-shoot on which, according to the courage of each, you dashed down either on sledges or skates. I was never a very good skater, but I was quite able to negotiate this iced sweep on my skates. The principal thing was to lean well forward so as not to lose your balance. It was a glorious feeling to fly down that steep incline, finishing with a wide sweeping curve out on to the lake.

The crowning excitement was when Mamma organized an *Eisfest*, that is to say, an evening festivity on the lake, with Chinese lanterns, music and so-called *Glühwein*, hot, red, cinnamon-spiced wine to drink.

Our friends of the *Eisfest* days were grown up, the officers of the local battalion having replaced Alfred's schoolboy friends. In those days the uniform had a tremendous prestige in Germany from which we were not immune, and of course each sister had her chosen favourite amongst the officers. Mine was a dark-eyed, somewhat eagle-featured lieutenant of the *beau ténébreux* type, with a dash of the adventurer about him. He interested me enormously, and he cleverly knew how to fire a young girl's imagination, giving my heart many a flutter. Besides, he was full of exciting plans for going to Zanzibar; why to Zanzibar of all places I cannot explain; but these dark plans added to his glamour, surrounding him with a sort of mystery; besides, it kept me always in a state of fear that he might suddenly disappear from our midst to sail forth upon his perilous adventures. I think that those in authority understood that this interesting young man knew how to make the most of his advantages so he was allowed in very small doses.

But I remember one little ball which Mamma gave for us in a funny little old *Schloss* opposite our own house. For once I was allowed a white dress! As finishing touch I had stuck a red rose in my sash, and

the black-eyed lieutenant stole that rose, and this, according to our code, was romance indeed, and a very daring act!

Speaking about balls and dances, I have one amusing little episode to relate. This was in the pre-lieutenant times and the little party in question was given at the end of the dancing-lesson season as a sort of demonstration of how much the patient little dancing-master martyr had been able to teach us. Cotillions were much *en vogue* in those days and were the supreme excitement of the evening. Of course each did her best to pair off with her chosen favourite, but with the eyes of authority severely on the look-out, our innocent combinations did not always succeed. Failure represented much heartache and not a few tears shed in secret. Little souvenirs were given at the end of the ball, flowers and also keepsakes of the most modest kind, but when these humble objects were offered by "him" they forthwith became exceedingly precious.

On the occasion I am speaking about, the cavaliers offered their partners large gingerbread hearts hung with gay ribbons. The heart I was given that evening was entirely satisfactory; it had a pink and white face and was hung by a ribbon exactly the right shade and above all it was offered to me by the right boy. When I went to bed that night I hung it above my head on my little camp bed which stood in a row with my sisters'; each bed exactly the same shape and size, lined up in a cheerful and airy room, which we still called the night nursery.

Many a night did I sleep peacefully beneath the shadow of this pink and white gingerbread heart. But one night, a few weeks later, I awoke with a start; there was a funny, gnawing sound quite near my ear. I hastily sat up in the dark; I thought I heard something like the scurrying of wee feet . . . after that silence.

But on awakening next morning I noticed that the precious heart had slightly changed its shape, it looked thinner somehow, but I did not think much about it. The following night, however, I was again awoken by something wee and light running over my sheet close up against my face. This was decidedly unpleasant and I lay quite still, holding my breath, half scared but also in hopes of discovering what it was; then I heard crunch . . . crunch . . . again that gnawing sound . . . I moved . . . a frightened scurry of tiny feet . . . then silence.

Suddenly I understood. Mice! Mice were at my heart. My precious gingerbread keepsake, sentimentally attached to the head of my bed. Pink ribbons and all it had finally to be removed; I could not endure those nightly visits; besides, the heart was rapidly diminishing, soon nothing would be left of it; for such is life. *Tout passe!*

My mother had a theory that princesses must marry young. "When they are over twenty," she would declare, "they begin to think too much and to have too many ideas of their own which complicate matters. Besides, an unmarried princess has no position at all. Princesses *must* marry." And when Mamma said "must" she meant it.

I am not going to enumerate our admirers or suitors; anyhow, Mamma's theories gave her no difficulties; in those days there seemed to be no end of young princes looking for wives and I believe Mamma had only to pick and choose. But we knew nothing about this, as our clever parent knew her daughters well enough to surround whatever plan she had with sufficient romance to make it attractive, for we were at a sentimental age and none of us would have accepted with open eyes a so-called *mariage de raison*.

At an early age we were therefore taken about, at a too early age, I think, because our appearance on the scene disturbed the plans of other royal mothers who disapproved of daughters being brought out so soon. Besides, we were in no hurry to grow up and did not at all like being thrust into the company of older cousins who resented our untimely intrusion into the world when, according to them (and quite rightly), we should still have been in the schoolroom. But the young princes seemed to be of another opinion and before I was sixteen more than one gave me to understand that I was entirely to his taste.

No names need be mentioned, but as this is the story of my life, it must be told that there came a period when my heart was touched by two suitors of the same name but belonging to far different corners of Europe, and I knew many a pang because each in his own way let me feel that it was in my power to make him either happy or miserable . . . for they too were young. I did not want to make anyone miserable; but the heart is such a troublesome organ and at that early age anything definite seemed so far off. Besides, one could not make up one's mind all by oneself!

I am aware that this way of looking at things does not fit into the ideas of to-day when young people have taken so much into their own hands, when they are almost wiser and certainly more advanced than their parents, and when their knowledge of facts is complete.

We were brought up in a Fool's Paradise, carefully guarded from reality; our world was delusion and our mother was horrified if anyone dared to lift for us, were it but an inch, "this painted veil that those who live call life." Yet Life was knocking at the door. . . . Ever more insistent was its knock, and with it came that unrest, chief characteristic of awakening youth. But if marriage was in our thoughts it was only as a distant goal; all roads finally pointed that way, but it was a long, long way off. So when we were brought together with princes who, according to our mother's ideas, were acceptable, we were quite at our ease, enjoying their company and their attention without worrying our heads much about their intentions. The sentimental visions they evoked were vague and unprecise. But the song of love is both sweet and torturing and I remember looks and allusions as well as whispered words that might have meant more than they actually said and which I hugged to my soul, repeating them over and over again; they made my heart flutter, for all was romance in those days, mystery and discovery, but strange as it may seem to the girls of to-day, none of my flirtations ever went as far as a kiss. (This perhaps was because I was so young.)

So many voices seemed pressing in upon one, so many eyes had messages and one never doubted the truth or importance of any word of love.

Sister Ducky was more austere, more unbending than I was. She was always the monitor; the one who would tolerate no nonsense, who admonished or cautioned. Her advice or reproof was listened to and there was a steel-like rectitude about her which commanded respect. I remember an exceedingly funny little episode in which Ducky stands out clearly in her mentor's attitude.

Our Rosenau gardener had a nephew. The nephew had large, languorous brown eyes; being painfully shy, there was something awkward, even ungainly about his movements, but he was decidedly good-looking though his excessive timidity made him seem sulky. Wordless and constrained, he had nevertheless, through the mysterious telepathy of youth, made me understand that in spite of his being nothing but the

gardener's nephew, and I a blonde little princess, his heart was aching with love for me. It must have been his eyes which made me understand this, for it was certainly not his tongue. Ducky, for ever on the alert, had discovered this little by-play and was half sympathetic and half contemptuous, but the boy's exceeding timidity had something touching about it, in addition to which he was so perfectly harmless.

Finally I confessed to this critical sister that I wanted to give some little keepsake to the languorous-eyed youth, for Eve-like, his evident admiration had not left me unmoved. Ducky was gracious, and putting our heads together it was finally decided that, as I was apt with my paint-brush, I should paint him something. But what? Ah, a good idea, Easter being near I must paint him something for Easter, it would make the gift more plausible. After much reflection we decided that I should paint on an ostrich's egg. I happened to possess just such an object, globular, thick and polished like ivory, mellow of tint, smooth to the touch; and on this pleasant surface, with much care and love I painted little bouquets of mauve pansies. How well I can still see those mauve pansies! The egg being round and slippery, it was difficult to hold and I had the greatest trouble not to smudge my flowers whilst painting. To complete this artistic treasure, two holes had, with excruciating anxiety, been bored at the top and at the bottom of the egg, so as to be able to pass a ribbon through it from which it could be suspended. The ribbon was mauve, matching the flowers. Ducky took as much interest as I did in the creation of this Easter offering, and finally a propitious day was fixed upon which the gift was to be offered.

Although in the same class with Alfred's friends, being the gardener's nephew he was not (for these were pre-democratic days) amongst those invited to our parties, and could only be encountered in the large Rosenau kitchen garden on high days and holidays when he visited his Uncle Terks, the royal head gardener. Terks was tall, dark and taciturn, he grew wonderful flowers but it was not his smile which made them bloom. Terks never smiled. We were rather in awe of Terks, as, probably, was also his nephew, and both parties divined that Terks would have no sympathy with his nephew's sentimentalities.

Ducky, well aware that two is company and three is none, decided not to preside over the actual offering of the precious Easter egg, but to walk about amongst the flowers, close enough at hand to be able to in-

interrupt the *tête-à-tête* when she considered it had lasted sufficiently, for neither she nor I was quite comfortable about this interview over which the Herr Obergärtner Terk's frown hung like a threat.

The young man accepted my gift with the shamefaced timidity which was to be expected of him; his eyes indeed were eloquent, but his attitude sheepish and even tinged with resentfulness. For all that his hands received the frail offering with that special tenderness characteristic of the strong and artless. Few words were exchanged, but I felt a certain elation in the silent scene; then, full of dignity, Ducky sailed down upon us through the flowers like a black swan out to protect her brood.

But there is an epilogue to this simple little story. Not very long after this sentimental episode I returned home after a short absence, engaged to a prince from a foreign country; from that day onwards the gardener's nephew no more saluted me, and when he met me he would turn his head another way so as not to have to take off his hat.

I wonder how long he kept the Easter egg.

CHAPTER IX

DEVONPORT—BERLIN—BETROTHAL

BEFORE I relate those events which decided my fate, I want to mention Devonport, that fair sea-haven, one with Plymouth, which was for a short time something of a home to us.

This was to be our father's last naval command; after this he would have reached the top of the ladder and his career as a sailor would be over; besides, Duke Ernest of Coburg, whose heir he was, was getting very old and at any moment the Duke of Edinburgh might be called to other duties.

As a real Englishman Papa dreaded the change which stood ahead of him, for he was thoroughly British in taste and habit and bitter was the prospect of expatriation.

Devonport was a sort of interlude, and in my own life it stands out as a last taste of all I was soon destined to leave and give up, England, home and the beloved Navy.

Devonport never came up to the enchantment of Malta with its southern sun and mysterious eastern atmosphere; but there was the sea, there were Papa and Mamma, there were many friends and there was also that beautiful county of Devonshire, so enchanting with its hills and dales, its rivers and forests, its steep roads and high hedges, beautiful gardens and, in places, quite southern vegetation.

Owing to our studies at Coburg, we three elder sisters spent less time at Devonport than sister Baby, from whom Mamma could never bear to be separated and whom she took with her wherever she was obliged to go; so my recollections of Devonport are tinged with a certain vagueness.

At first we did not much care for Admiralty House. We considered it a very uninteresting house. It looked out upon a wide and equally uninteresting square and it had very little garden to boast of, only an oblong piece at the back of the building where we used to play quarrelsome games of croquet.

Opposite us stood the house of the General-in-Command. This was

a much finer habitation with a large garden full of trees and that atmosphere of shaded mystery which means so much to children and that our garden entirely lacked.

Fortunately General Harrison and his family were most hospitable and welcoming. They had three daughters, May, Violet and Evelyn, whose ages fitted ours exactly, and with whom we very soon became friends, so that much of our time was spent in their grounds, where, although we were rapidly growing up, wild and romping games were played. The garden overlooked the sea, and if I remember rightly, ended in ramparts. Unforgettable are the excellent teas offered us in the Harrisons' house when kindly Lady Harrison called us, heated and exhausted by our games, into that cosiest of meals which is England's specialty. This friendship with the Harrison daughters was one of the chief features of our Devonport life. With the eldest daughter, May, who later married a clergyman, I am still in correspondence but the other two have dropped out of my life.

It is strange how there are periods in one's existence which have become hazy in one's memory, whilst others stand out clearly in every detail. Devonport belongs to the hazy memories. As I said before, it was an interlude.

I remember certain things quite distinctly, others have been partially effaced like a smudged pastel.

All things pertaining to the sea played a great part at Devonport, rowing, sailing and wonderful swimming: our amusements were healthy and impregnated with that feeling of good-fellowship peculiar to the Navy. As at Malta and at Osborne, the sailors were our great friends. But strangely enough no one particular face stands out clearly; I remember the things we did, the places we went to, more clearly than the people who were with us, and those whom we visited.

When high tide permitted we would steam in a rapid launch up the different rivers, enchanted excursions into unknown lands of almost fairy-like beauty. I remember glimpses of wonderful parks and gardens running down to the water's edge with stately houses blinking down upon us from afar; I remember the joy, the excitement, the glee-ful sensation of adventure, but I have mostly forgotten the names of the places we went to, as too I have forgotten the faces of those who received us at the end of our travels.

At all times passionately fond of gardens and flowers I remember a picture which burst upon us during one of these enchanted excursions: a garden full of orange, yellow, pink and coral azaleas, grouped in gorgeous masses against a tropically green background of trees. In cascades of colour they came spilling down the velvety slope as though eager to mirror their many-tinted loveliness in the water upon which we were floating by. With a sort of ache in my heart I longed to hold fast that fleeting vision of beauty, but it slipped away and was gone. . . . Upon my mind, however, that picture stamped itself for all time. *Tout passe*. Yes, but there are certain visions that cannot be wiped out; whenever I look back, I can re-evoke the enchantment of those flowers reflecting their beauty upon the face of the waters which bore us all too quickly away.

There was also a memorable excursion up one of the celebrated Devon "gullies"—I think they used to call them; deep, wooded valleys through which gay streams rushed, singing their own little songs beneath enchanted shadows. On this excursion I fell into the water and was rescued by the miller's son, quite like in a fairy-story, and had to change clothes with the miller's daughter who lent me her dress to go home in. This was a great event for the miller's family, and when I married soon afterwards my kindly rescuers offered me as wedding-present a large framed photograph of their mill, a picture still in my possession to-day.

Devonport and the surrounding neighbourhood seemed to appreciate the presence of a member of Queen Victoria's family in their midst; my father and mother were well-loved and most hearty and courteous hospitality was offered to every one of us.

Many, many years later, when, after the War, with my husband, who had become an allied King, we paid an official visit to the country of my birth, Plymouth and Devonport asked me to come amongst them once more and gave me a huge and touching reception in memory of the days when, as one of four happy sisters, I had lived amongst them, blue-eyed, fair-haired and unsophisticated, an innocent, unsuspecting little maiden with no knowledge whatever about life.

It was a heart-stirring occasion which made me live over again the treasures of the past. I clasped many a rough hand become shaky with age, and looked into more than one eye dimmed by the passing

of years, but one and all remembered little Marie, the Sailor Prince's fair-haired daughter who, at such an early age, had left the beloved Old Country to go to a foreign land. . . .

Beyond Devonport harbour lay Mount Edgcumbe, a marvellously beautiful country seat belonging to a courteous old lord of the same name. He had opened wide his gates to us, and Mount Edgcumbe became our dearest playing-ground, to which we went nearly every day. Suspended above the sea, it had lovely drives through beautiful woods and over undulating downs, a noble estate which became as familiar to us as though it had been our home.

In parts the vegetation was almost that of the Riviera and you could drive through whole avenues of evergreens, and there was also a laurel walk with a marvellous view over the sea. But our favourite haunt was the Italian Garden. Planted on the water's edge, it was easily reached by boat from our side of the harbour; a shady retreat full of poetry, it had terraces, colonnades, flagged walks and secret-looking pools. It also had the classical "orangery." Flanked by beautiful woods, it was there that I picked my last English primroses and I have an enchanted remembrance of how they grew in pale, fragrant clumps all over the banks and up in amongst the century-old trees.

Lord Mount Edgcumbe possessed another lovely place, an old historical manor with the name of Cotheal. It lay farther inland, surrounded by magnificent woods; it was haunted and mysterious, with a magnificent old stone hall, dim and twisting stairs, narrow corridors, tapestried chambers; a place full of atmosphere which gave us many a thrill. We loved going to this secret old place, it attracted us irresistibly; it had all the romance of the past blended with that mellow perfection and sweetness which English country houses alone possess.

I visited Cotheal again during that memorable reception given me at Plymouth in 1924 and thought it even more wonderful than I had remembered; besides, the present Lady Mount Edgcumbe had done much to beautify its gardens and make the quaint old house homelike and cosy.

My parents made many friends and entertained a good deal. I have a faint remembrance of dinner-parties given at Admiralty House, and a clearer one of tea-parties in different houses out in the country; every-

where we were charmingly received but for all that, as I said before, this part of my life has remained hazy, probably because of the big event which about that time sealed my fate and which overshadows all the rest. But before this took place we went once again to Russia and this time for a very sad reason.

It was at Coburg during the autumn of 1891 that Mamma received news of the death of Uncle Paul's young wife.

Grand Duke Paul was the youngest son of Alexander II and our mother's favourite brother. Hardly three years before he had married Alexandra of Greece, eldest daughter of King George and Queen Olga; and now "Alix," as we all called her, that sweet young wife and mother, was dead! The news came like a thunderbolt. Two lovers, full of their young happiness, they had filled our quiet home with their joy. A daughter had then already been born to them and it was at the birth of their second child, little Dmitri, that Alix had died.

What a cruel, unnatural event. Alix was dead! Our guest so recently, that sweet, gay, happy young creature, she was no more. It was unbelievable. Could happiness be so quickly torn asunder and destroyed?

Mamma decided on a hasty departure for St. Petersburg and that Ducky and I, the two eldest daughters, were to go with her. She wanted to be at the funeral, but above all she wanted to be with the brother she so dearly loved.

How well I remember that funeral when young Alix was laid to rest alongside those who had gone before her. She was buried in the great church of the Peter and Paul fortress where, since Peter the Great, all the Tsars and their kith and kin had been interred. The fortress of Peter and Paul—what a sinister sound it has. All through history, terrible tales are attached to its name. Tales of crime, fear and suffering to which the Bolshevik reign has added a hundredfold.

Side by side, in impressive rows, under plain oblong blocks of white marble, lie all those great men and women of the past; one tomb exactly like the other, austere symbols of how death levels all things; pomp and glory, joy and pain at an end; dust to dust. At an end also sin and crime, hope and fear; each stone guarding its own secret, the secret of those different lives, many of which had ended in unspeakable tragedy.

The last of these was Grandpapa. There he lay, the size and colour of his tomb exactly like all the others; heavy white marble plainly engraved with his name, and beside him Grandmamma. She had died a year or two before him in her bed, a broken-hearted woman, her health all gone to pieces, a woman who had hidden away her suffering behind a proud, dignified bearing. Never did her narrow lips open in complaint, no one knew if she was aware of what all the world knew. But he, "*le Tzar libérateur*," as he had been called because it was he who liberated the serfs, had been carried to his grave mutilated; his legs torn from his body by the bomb that the Nihilists had thrown at him whilst he was returning from some ceremony.

Two bombs were thrown; the first had not touched him, but being a brave and also a kindly man, he had stopped his carriage (or was it sledge?) because, having heard the explosion, he himself wished to see who had been hurt. A second bomb was thrown, and that for him was the end of the road. . . .

Grandpapa Emperor, Mamma's father, a man with liberal ideas who had trusted his people! It was after his violent death that the era of repression began again, Alexander III considering it dangerous to follow up his father's more advanced political conceptions. When the Nihilists' bomb put an end to Alexander II's reign he had been on the point of giving a Constitution to his vast Empire; his son, however, did not consider Russia ripe for such innovations.

And here we were, all gathered together in this great, gloomy cathedral, to lay a young wife and mother in her untimely grave. Full of the pomp and splendour characteristic of all Russian ceremonies was that funeral. Stupendous chants rose to the vaults, echoing again from the fortress-like walls; there were thousands of lighted tapers, fumes of incense, and those thundering bass voices of the cantors which always made me hold my breath, wondering how human lungs could sustain such an effort without bursting. Clad in deepest mourning, with long black veils on their heads, stood the Empress, grand duchesses and princesses, their dull black slashed by the bright ribbons of their respective orders, blue for the Empress, red for the grand duchesses, making their sombre apparel appear all the darker by contrast; and there was huge Uncle Sasha, surrounded by his enormous brothers, cousins and uncles, and as chief mourner, Uncle Paul, a little in

front of the others. Frailer than his brothers, though just as tall, and marvellously slim, Uncle Paul was a different type; darker and more gentle, he had soft brown eyes and the beautiful hands of his mother. In the white tunic and silver helmet of the Garde à Cheval, there was indeed something knight-like about him. I cannot remember if he wore this particular uniform at the funeral, but it was thus that I best remember him, long and slim like a slender marble column, with his caressing voice and luminous eyes. A man full of human kindness and understanding, a man who always defended those who were being attacked, who was always fair towards others, a charming companion, gay and intelligent, it was not astonishing that of all her brothers Mamma loved Uncle Paul best.

I can still see him bending over the bier upon which his lovely young wife lay with crossed hands, against which leaned a small holy image we all had to kiss in turn, and with a thin white veil over her face. I remember the tears running down his cheeks and how Uncle Serge, his favourite brother, took him in his arms when he made a desperate gesture of protest when at last they laid the coffin lid over the sweet face he had loved.

It was indeed a scene which made a deep impression upon the very young girls that we were then; the grand setting, the flickering tapers, the flowers, the impressive chants, and above all the grief of that young husband who had to be torn away from the coffin of his bride. *Tout passe . . .*

Many years later Uncle Paul married a lady not of his caste. Morganatic marriages were not sanctioned by the Emperor and it was a long time before Uncle Paul's wife was received or recognized by the family, my mother, in spite of her love for her brother, being one of those who held out longest in protest against her plebeian sister-in-law.

The Emperor (then Nicholas II) even banished his uncle for several years from Russia. Later, however, he was forgiven and his wife was received, but never on an equal footing with the grand duchesses. She was given the title of Princess Paléy and was a most devoted wife, adored by her husband, and she finally made heroic but unsuccessful efforts to rescue him from the hands of the Bolsheviks.

Uncle Paul was one of the four grand dukes murdered by the Reds in the winter of 1919, and, strangely enough, he met with his cruel death just within the walls of the Peter and Paul fortress, close to the church where so many years ago he had buried his young wife.

How strange, indeed, and sometimes awful, is man's fate.

Royal funerals are occasions for great family meetings, of kings and queens, princes and princesses, uncles, aunts, cousins of every degree, local as well as those of foreign lands.

It was several years since we had been in Russia, and a few years make a great difference at that early age. We were all growing up and stared at each other shyly, no one wanting to make advances for fear of rebuffs. Young people are not always merciful to each other, they are nearer Nature than their elders, are inclined to form clans so that outsiders are occasionally made to feel thoroughly uncomfortable; it was tremendously interesting to meet so many relations, but it was not an entirely pleasant experience. The boys and young men were inclined to like you too much and the girls were ready to snub you. We were at the horribly self-conscious age when you imagined that every look was a criticism, every word ironical; you suffered because you were so young, so awkward and completely unable to cope with what uncomfortably resembled a family court of justice.

There were large meetings in Cousin Xenia's rooms. Xenia was the Emperor Alexander III's eldest daughter and a year older than I; her especial chum was Minnie of Greece, the younger sister of poor Alix, whom we had just laid to rest. Having an immense admiration for Xenia, I found her evident preference for Minnie difficult to stand; besides, Minnie was backed by innumerable brothers of every age. She had not her sister's good looks, but she was animated, clever, amusing, masterful and rather noisy. There was an irresistible good-humour about her, but she also had an exceedingly sharp tongue. Much later in life we became friends, but in those early days I am afraid that we heartily disliked each other, and as none of us was so ready with out tongue as she was she made us feel greatly at a disadvantage.

Nor were we able to appreciate her many brothers, for they were decidedly rowdy and there were too many of them; there were the

Greek Georgie, the Greek Nicky, the Greek André, and they made us suffer. It was they especially who made us feel outsiders, they were so tremendously possessive and so loud.

Another huge family was the one which we called the "Mishels." These were really a generation older than we were, Mamma's first cousins, her Uncle Mishel's sons. Uncle Misha, as he was known in the family, was Grandpapa's youngest brother and a most kindly old gentleman looking for wives for his many sons and therefore extremely interested in his nieces and grand-nieces and so very kind to them all. There was Nicolas, Misha, Georgie, Sandro, Serge and Alexis. Some were closer in age to Mamma's generation, some to ours, but they used to come several strong to these family parties. They were not as loud as the Greeks, but the greatest teases ever born; they attracted and repulsed you in turns; you could not ignore them, but at the same time you were slightly afraid; the *charme Slave* at its wildest! You shuddered, but all the same you fell under their spell.

I have retained a curiously uneasy memory of those family gatherings. Fascinating as was the charm of all those young men, there was all the same something slightly uncanny about the Mishel cousins; a blending of strength and weakness, kindness and a generosity which almost amounted to lavishness, and yet a touch of cruelty somewhere, undefinable, but you sensed that it was there, dormant, hidden beneath their captivating ways. We too had Russian blood in us, so we were strongly attracted, but the English side seemed on guard, a little hostile, or anyhow watchful, so that we could not blend entirely, nor feel quite at home. And yet I think at that time it would have needed but little persuasion to keep me in Russia altogether.

But strangely enough our mother was strongly opposed to any Russian marriages for her daughters. Did she know her family too well? Who can tell? Or was it really because she did not want to put before us a religious conflict?

In Grandpapa's days the grand dukes had been allowed to marry Protestant princesses, leaving them free to become Greek Catholics later if their convictions permitted. But Uncle Sasha, who was less liberally inclined, had made severer rules; whoever married in his time into the Imperial family was expected then and there to become Orthodox, or the marriage received no Imperial sanction.

In those days the family spirit ruled supreme. In all Royal and Imperial families the head was bowed down to and considered omnipotent, no one dared discuss his decrees or cross his will. That was not so very long ago either ; we have indeed lived to see extraordinary changes !

So Mamma kept a watchful eye over her daughters ; she was quite equal to holding her own, no matter how autocratic her family might be, and she always had her say. She played the governess amongst the unruly younger generation, declaring that they were being brought up without any manners. She never spared her criticisms or caustic remarks, which did not, of course, make her very popular. There were no doubt several little side-plays, but of these we knew nothing. Mamma had really succeeded in bringing us up as perfect little innocents (little idiots we should say to-day). We took everything for granted and seldom inquired into the whys and wherefores of events going on around us.

We were, however, soon torn away from these interesting if somewhat perplexing family gatherings, and carried off to Ilinsky, Uncle Serge's country seat not far from Moscow, where poor Alix had died and to which Uncle Paul wished to return.

At Ilinsky we were the guests of Ella the beautiful, and that was supreme enchantment. More lovely than ever in her deep mourning, our feeling for her amounted to a sort of breathless adoration. She was almost too good to be true.

Having been Alix's closest friend she was heart-broken at her death, and it fell to her share to look after the motherless babies, which she did to the best of her ability till they were grown up, even after Uncle Serge's violent end.

Ilinsky was a delightful place on the banks of a large river, and surrounded by many woods. We were quartered in a cottage annexe of the bigger house. It was in the woods, and we loved it especially, as we were allowed to ride to our hearts' content on the excellent sandy ground. There were also wonderful drives and mushroom-hunts in the endless woods.

We also visited Moscow for the first time, and were completely fascinated by its endless churches, its prodigious Kremlin and by that semi-Asiatic atmosphere which made it so much more old Russian than

St. Petersburg with all its splendour. Moscow was at that time above all else the "City of the Tsars."

Again let me say "*Tout passe*" . . .

Later, both Ducky and I came back to Moscow for the coronation of Nicolas II and then indeed we were to know it in all its most Imperial glory, but this will be related in due season.

Russia had an extraordinary glamour for us in those days; an enormous world of a thousand splendours, of a thousand possibilities, with a feeling of dark mystery as background, something unfathomable and rather awful, a secret no one really possessed. . . .

Although thirty-six years have gone by since that event which decided my fate, my pen seems to tremble in my hand when I set about recounting it. It is as though the difficult decision were again put before me. A sort of giddiness comes over me when I but think of it. Perhaps I feel it even more in looking back down the long road of knowledge, than I did then at that early age. Now, because I have lived it, I know all too well what it meant, but then I did not, for I was young and foolish and brave, like all beginners of life when they are idealists.

The first time I met my future husband was at Wilhelmshöhe, near Cassel, a beautiful old eighteenth-century château where Kaiser Wilhelm was residing during the *Kaisermanöver*, a yearly event of great importance in the Germany of my youth.

The Imperial couple had invited Mamma to come with her two eldest daughters, although Ducky was then only fifteen and I sixteen, indeed rather an early age to be brought out into the official world. Our feelings were complex, a mixture of shyness and protest to which we may, however, add a certain percentage of flattered excitement. We were a bit awkward, no doubt, but though innocents, we were not exactly stupid girls. We had always been accustomed to see people and had been brought up to be able to talk in several languages and make ourselves agreeable in any company; besides, we were gay and full of the joy of life.

The only person we knew at Cassel was Prince Friedrich of Hohenzollern (King Carol of Roumania's younger brother), General-in-Command in that town, who had been more than once our guest at

Coburg, where military duties occasionally called him. In those days we three sisters had been entirely fascinated by his quiet, friendly manner. Although he had the eagle nose characteristic of the Sigmaringen Hohenzollerns, it was set in a smiling, friendly face which had none of King Carol's forbidding austerity. *Onkelchen*, as we called him, was really *gemütlich*, the only word which rightly describes him. His voice had a soft drawl that was very attractive, and though not really ironical he had a twinkle in his eye which put the young at their ease at once.

All three sisters had absolutely fallen in love with *Onkelchen*, and it was a great joy to find him here at this rather formidable Imperial court. Besides, *Täntchen*, his wife, whom we met here for the first time, was just as delightful as her husband. Small, thin and childless, she loved the younger members of her family and knew how to attract them, for she had a very big heart in her diminutive body.

There was nothing formal or pompous about this couple, and later on, when I had become one of an overstrict and unbending family, they were often a refuge to those weary of formulas and political routine. And on a visit to this uncle and aunt, King Carol of Roumania had sent his nephew and heir, it being considered necessary that he should have a change of atmosphere. He could at the same time follow the *Kaisermanöver* which would improve his military science. King Carol never did anything without the very best of reasons. Thus it was that we first met at the Kaiser's table.

Kaiser William was our first cousin, his mother, the Empress Frederick, former Princess Royal of Great Britain, being our father's eldest sister. William was, of course, much older than we were, and though an interesting personality, he was not a favourite cousin. He was no doubt full of good feelings, but his attitude towards his family in general was brusque and at the same time boisterous.

He did not exactly intimidate you, but he "put your back up" the moment he addressed you in his overloud and deliberately *bourchicose* manner; you felt all prickly with opposition, there was something about him that roused antagonism.

Empress Augusta Victoria, his wife, was, I believe, full of the milk of human kindness, a woman of high principles, a good mother, a good and also patient wife; but her amiability had something condescending

about it which never rose to the height of cordiality or ease; there was effort in it. Somehow her smile seemed glued on; it was an official smile.

But she seconded Germany's ever-restless ruler with really laudable abnegation, bearing him six sons and one daughter, true to her post, through thick and thin, through good and bad, and always with that smile which she seemed to put on daily with the gorgeous, if somewhat tasteless gowns she was fond of, a smile that finally, as years advanced, seemed actually carved into her face. Was she ever tired of the eternal round? Who can tell? She never gave sign of weariness, but went on bravely, year in, year out to the very end . . . a tragic end.

All those who go on and on untiringly, whether stone-breakers, kings or cooks, awake in me a feeling of admiration; it is the ceaseless effort, the eternal "same thing" which needs the greatest patience and stamina. These virtues were Augusta Victoria's to the full.

Many years later, when my husband and I were their guests officially at Berlin, her hair was white, but she was still turning on the wheel of her duties. Her smile was as brave and impersonal as it had been in her youth, and looking at her with a certain involuntary admiration I suddenly saw her as an automaton, wound up by duty which death alone would unwind.

Much of that visit to Wilhelmshöhe is now hazy, whilst certain unimportant details stand out clearly, such as the mauve color of our festive gowns worn for the big court dinner, and even the orchid I found in one of the Imperial vases the same shade as my dress, which I pinned on to my shoulder, very proud of this improvement to my attire. I also remember Mamma's raised eyebrow when she remarked my affectation, not quite sure if she approved, but letting my little vanity pass as such whilst she impressed upon us how important it was not to be tongue-tied at dinner. "A princess who does not talk to her neighbour is a nuisance to society," was one of her maxims.

If I remember rightly, I was seated beside the Crown Prince of Roumania on this occasion. He was a good-looking, shy young man who tried to overcome his timidity by laughing. He spoke no English, was evidently very pleased to be in Germany again, and told us nothing about Roumania, nor did I ask him any questions as to that far-off country, being rather vague about its place on the map. But both

Ducky and I liked this unpretentious young prince who went out of his way to be amiable to us. Besides, was he not the nephew of *Onkelchen* and *Täntchen* Hohenzollern, who both were so charming?

Whether the poor young fellow had been told that we were marriageable princesses, I do not know. In those days girls were kept in ignorance of the marriage plots of their parents, but not so the princes, I suppose, as the proposing (poor things) fell to their share.

I wish I could remember more about that visit to Emperor William's court, but it is a picture that has been effaced, except for the beautiful situation of the *Schloss*, its splendid, formal gardens and the glorious beech forests which formed its background; that and my mauve-coloured dress, Augusta Victoria's smile, the young prince's laughing (not to say giggling) timidity, and *Onkelchen's* comfortable, drawling voice full of fatherly encouragements.

Was it all a plot? Were they all in it? I do not know; that first meeting, in *my* mind, anyhow, was without importance.

Was it in the autumn of the same year or the next that we were invited to visit our cousin, the Hereditary Princess of Saxe-Meiningen, eldest sister of the Kaiser, at Berlin? I do not well remember. Anyhow, we three elder sisters were taken there for a week, I think.

"Charly," as we called our cousin, was an exceedingly fascinating and intelligent woman. For many years she played a large, finally a too large, part in my life. A good deal our senior, though our cousin, she was more Mamma's companion than ours. She was often our guest at Coburg, where she was close friends with Dr. X. As children we adored her with that fervour young creatures bring to their loving. Like most young married women she was flattered by our admiration, and she could be more charming than anyone I have ever known. She was small and inclined to be plump (a tendency which she always fought, much to the detriment of her health, for she was nearly always ailing), and she was one of the few women of those days who wore short hair. She was neat to a degree and always beautifully dressed, somewhat imitating Queen Alexandra, whom, like everyone else, she much admired. Never have I heard a softer, more melodious voice; there was a purr in it which would have disarmed an ogre. She was an inveterate smoker and always diffused around her a delicate odour of

cigarettes and Hammam. Not really a beauty, her face was most attractive, the lower part having a slight twist, and when she talked the tip of her small and well-shaped nose moved slightly downwards.

Yes, I remember her every peculiarity, down to the way she laid her fingers over the lid of her precious cigarette-cases before she opened them, and the way she would tap her cigarette on the table before fitting it into its holder, because once I loved her very dearly, and though she was later no longer my friend, I am still grateful to her for the delight she was to me in those early, unsophisticated days. Each time she arrived at Coburg, or at the Rosenau, was an occasion for excitement and rejoicing. Her movements were deliberate and gentle, like those of a cat, like a cat also the soft way she touched things; each of her gestures was a caress. She knew many things, though not as many as she gave you to believe; she spoke always as a connoisseur, be it about horses, music, flowers, cooking or army equipment, and for many long years I bowed down before her superior knowledge till I discovered what she really was. Amongst her many passions was also that of politics. Capable of lifelong friendships, of generosity and even of abnegation, she was, for all that, one of the most fickle and changeable women I have ever had to do with. She had what my mother used to call "*des engouements*," and when they were over, it was as though she had never even known the person, place or object which, the year before, had been a dominating, all-absorbing passion.

If I describe this lady so minutely it is because for many years she played a large part in my life, and not always a happy one. To this fascinating princess our mother took us, following up, I believe, the plan she and Charly had conceived together, for I learned, many years later, that it was through Charly that Mamma had got into touch with King Carol and my husband's parents, who were looking for a wife for their second son, destined one day to be Roumania's king.

Charly, in her own house in Berlin, was quite a different person from Charly, our beloved Coburg guest. Here she was one of a gay and exceedingly worldly set and we were too young to have our place amongst such sophisticated company. They all had their own joys, their own mannerisms, their special language, their loves, enthusiasms and abhorrences.

We looked on and suffered the cruellest pangs of jealousy, watching our idol exposing a side of her character we had never before dreamed of; whilst for us, uninteresting *Backfische* to whom she had promised a glorious time, she had hardly a word or a look.

Bitter disillusion! That week spent in Charly's Berlin house belongs to one of the most painful memories of my young life.

The Crown Prince of Roumania was amongst the many young men this gay cousin received almost daily, and if we had continued meeting in her house I do not think that to-day I should be where I am, for it was only too natural that the grown-up German prince, happy to be back in Berlin, should be much more amused in her exhilarating company than searching for topics of conversation in keeping with our *Backfisch* innocence.

In all countries the "smart set" is cruel to outsiders, but there was a special flavour about this Berlin atmosphere that Charly and her *chic* friends spread around them, which I remember with acute suffering.

Many years later, as grown-up women, when Ducky and I compared notes, living over again our memories of that Berlin visit, tears of resentment still came to our eyes, so acute had been our humiliation and disillusion.

But nevertheless, through it all, we clung to our love for Cousin Charly, for the young cannot shatter their ideals all at once. It needed years entirely to destroy my feeling for her, and even after I had discovered what a false friend she was, her soft, purring voice could, if I shut my eyes, occasionally awaken again that old sensation of delight she had given me when I was a child. I could see her again arriving at the Rosenau with little presents for us children, filling the quiet house with her delicious perfume of cigarettes and Hammam, and ravishing our adoring eyes with her lovely clothes and beautiful jewels, because Charly loved jewels almost beyond anything else.

Only on horseback we could never stand her; even then her theories and criticizing superiority made a torture of that favourite sport. Charly belonged to those beings who, with a single word of disdain, could shrivel up your ardent enthusiasm, make your dearest possession appear worthless or rob your closest friend of her charm, and this with a voice, soft and gentle like a caress. Charly's appreciation and depreciation of things was a decree.

This is a characteristic little story :

It was in the days when to please Charly was my supremest ambition, and praise from her lips had the value of rubies. She had been raving about a certain classical piece of poetry ; it was the most beautiful poem ever written ; the poet was a genius, etc., and whilst pronouncing this verdict her voice became deep and emotional so that it stirred your very heartstrings. Forthwith I decided to learn that wonderful poem by heart. It was long, in the most difficult classical German ; I never learned easily by heart, but all for the love of Charly I struggled through every part of it till I mastered it completely, and, like a lover, awaited Charly's return so as to cast my humble offering at her feet.

Charly reappeared next season like the sun rising at its appointed time, and of course I was ardently anxious to recite my poem. For this it was necessary to lead the conversation into literary channels. This I finally succeeded in doing, but when, with a beating heart, I mentioned the celebrated poem, what was my consternation at hearing my beloved declare : "Oh, that old stuff, no one reads *his* poems to-day !" Yes, that was Charly all over.

But to Charly's honour let it here be mentioned that towards Mamma she was, I believe, loyal to the very end. Even after thrones had crumbled and known worlds with their traditions had fallen to pieces, when new times stared the two old friends in the face, Charly, a shadow of her former self, would still go to Coburg to visit my broken-hearted mother, who lived to see the destruction of her kith and kin in Russia, Germany humiliated and all she believed in torn up by the roots.

Finally it was Charly who died a year before my mother, died cruelly of cancer, the same illness of which both her father and mother had died so many years before.

The next meeting with the Crown Prince of Roumania was at Munich. Springtime—a feeling of mystery and excitement in the air ! This meeting, I believe, had been carefully arranged, but of course my sisters and I did not know this. We were thrown together as much as possible. My mother combined excursions, drives, the visting of picture galleries, shops, exhibitions, theatres. Munich is the town of towns for this sort of thing.

The young prince was excruciatingly shy and laughed more than

ever to mask his timidity. Curiously enough it was his extraordinary timidity which attracted me most; there was something so young, so suppressedly eager and just a little helpless about him. It gave you a longing to put him at his ease, to make him comfortable; it aroused your motherly feelings, in fact you wanted to help him.

I was much too young myself to have any positive conception of things, besides, our education had been according to the ideas of those times. We had been kept in glorious, but I cannot help considering dangerous and almost cruel, ignorance of all realities; in fact our education had been based upon nothing but illusions and disillusion and a completely false conception of life. There was perhaps a serenity about it which the girls of to-day will never know, a sort of stupid happiness, but for all that it was cruel, yes, cruel is the only word which really describes it; it was a sort of trapping of innocence, a deliberate blinding against life as it truly is, so that with shut eyes and perfect confidence we would have advanced towards any fate.

But we were both young, there was love in the air, it was springtime and Mamma had a happy, expectant face.

There was a bouquet of pink roses, a little chat near the open window whilst the moon rose slowly above the houses of the town, an hotel room, anything but a romantic setting, and yet . . . love in the air.

That is about all there is to relate about that Munich meeting, no other remembrance of it remains to me; a few snatches of conversation without any special interest, a bouquet of roses and the moon . . . not enough to make a good story, nevertheless the beginning of many things.

And then a little later, "*im wunderschönen Monat Mai*" came our engagement, and of all things in the Neue Palais at Potsdam, under the approving eye of Kaiser William and beneath the benignly conventional smile of Augusta Victoria, whom the family pleased to call Dona.

Mamma was radiant and it was, I believe, Charly who had actually led the timid prince up to the crucial moment. How he ever had the courage to propose is to-day still a mystery to me; but he *did* and I accepted—I just said "Yes," as though it had been quite a natural and simple word to say. "Yes," and with that "Yes" I sealed my fate, opened the door upon life, a long life, the story of which I am setting

out to relate; and to relate as fairly as possible—at least such is my intention.

That same evening Kaiser William gave a huge banquet in our honour, on the Pfaueninsel, a lovely island in one of the Potsdam lakes. In a characteristically eloquent speech the Emperor announced our engagement. A setting both regal and military; champagne, "*Hochs*" and congratulations. But I remember few details of that festivity. I was excited, believed that I was very happy, but beneath all the noise, glamour and glory there was a feeling of *angoisse* which made Ducky and me clasp hands with something like apprehension.

There was already a foretaste of parting, of tearing asunder of beloved ties, it was a door open upon a future all unknown. All was mysterious, undiscovered land. We hardly knew my future husband, and none of his family except *Onkelchen* and *Täntchen* and we had once had a glimpse of his father, Fürst Leopold of Hohenzollern, one of the most charming men of his time. But Uncle Charles or Carol, and his far-off country, Roumania, all that was hazy, must not be too clearly thought of or one might become afraid.

And above all there was Ducky, Ducky, dearest of companions and comrades, however should we have the courage to part? Subconsciously I realized that she was full of resentment; I felt that she could not understand my easy consent, that simple-minded acceptance of an almost unknown man; in her heart of hearts she disapproved of this "Yes," which had been so quickly, too quickly said. It meant separation, it meant the beginning of something new in which she would have no part; we had always shared everything, and now here was something I was not going to, could not, share any longer.

That evening we met the first Roumanian who had ever crossed our path—Colonel Coanda, my bridegroom's A.D.C.—a tall, amiable, good-looking man in a strange uniform, who was beaming with delight, for the Roumanians were very anxious that their young heir to the throne should marry according to the country's desire.

It seems that a granddaughter of Queen Victoria, a princess whose uncles and cousins sat on many thrones, was just what they all wanted, it was what they called "*un beau mariage*"; one which opened out a new future to a still rather unknown country "somewhere in the Near

East," for this, let it be confessed, was how, in those days, we looked upon my now so beloved Roumania.

Colonel Coanda knew how to demonstrate his joy. He spoke in French and expressed himself with much greater facility than his shy young prince. He found many words in which to tell us how delighted the King and the people of Roumania would be, what a splendid reception they would give the young bride, how beautiful was his country, how romantic the scenery, how picturesque the peasants. He said the people "would carry their future Queen on their hands"—I well remember his using that expression—that they would build her a sweet home; that with her fair hair and blue eyes she would be considered as a good fairy from beyond the seas. Oh yes, Colonel Coanda knew how to say pleasant things; Ducky and I stood hand in hand, listening to him, and visions, tempting visions, passed suddenly before our eyes. . . .

CHAPTER X
PREPARATIONS FOR MARRIAGE AND
NEW RELATIONS

THE times which followed were feverishly full of excitement, a blending of joy, anxiety, apprehension, hope and regret. It was all so sudden and so many different sides had to be faced. It was all very well saying "yes," and having a shy, good-looking young man to adore you, but things did not stand still at that.

What would Papa think about it? Papa had not been there at the engagement and somehow my conscience was not quite easy; I felt, almost knew, that Papa had had other dreams. And then there was Grandmamma Queen, she would have to approve of my future husband; none of her granddaughters married without her approval. We should have to go to Windsor and be inspected, a rather formidable ordeal; but most weighty of all, there was "Onkel Karl," King of Roumania, to face. You could not be long in the company of Ferdinand, Crown Prince of Roumania, without discovering that "*der Onkel*," as he called him, loomed almost oppressively large in his life. When he spoke of him something very like anxiety and not far removed from dread came into his eyes; one felt that a shiver ran down his spine. *Der Onkel* was certainly a cold wind to his nephew, rather than a warming flame. . . .

It was decided that the first move should be to Sigmaringen, the birthplace and home of the Hohenzollerns, and to Sigmaringen would come Roumania's ruler, to sanction his nephew's choice. No doubt the bride probably had been the stern King's choice, but this I did not know; I lived in the castle of my illusions and in my happy innocence had no idea that everything had not been the romantic play of chance.

So to Sigmaringen we went. Sigmaringen, that snug little town so far removed from the wear and tear of large centres, with its superb feudal castle looking down upon it, like an eagle enthroned upon a rock.

Several centuries old, this ancestral stronghold mirrors its walls and towers in the limpid waters of the Danube. Here but a small stream, quite near its source, it is nevertheless the selfsame river which rolls



MY BRIDGEGROOM—THE CROWN PRINCE FERDINAND OF ROUMANIA



THE CASTLE OF SIGMARINGEN



FÜRST CARL ANTON OF HOHENZOLLERN SIGMARINGEN—MY HUSBAND'S
GRANDFATHER

its mighty waters through that far-off country over which one of Sigmaringen's children was called upon to rule. From west to east, through several lands and over thousands of miles, it is an ever-broadening ribbon binding the old home to the new. A curious coincidence, the beginning and the end . . . almost symbolic, in fact, to those who like to ponder over the intricacies of human destinies.

Sigmaringen, with its cosy little town nestling like a flock of well-fed geese beneath the shadow of the old castle, was a perfect picture of the Germany of that time; a self-sufficient, self-sufficing little place, living in happy respect of its *Fürstliche Familie* which was the centre, the pride, the very *raison d'être* of the whole country.

That first visit to Sigmaringen was all sunshine; I still remember it with a happy feeling of gratitude. Sadder and less loving times were to follow, but that first glimpse of the lovely place and that first meeting with a family which welcomed me with open arms, was all sweetness and warmth.

They had all gathered together for the occasion, my future father-and mother-in-law, with Nando and his two brothers, *Onkelchen* and *Täntchen*, and also dear Grandmamma Josephine, widow of the late Fürst Carl Anton.

Carl Anton, Nando's grandfather, had played an important political part in his day. He was a man of wide views and liberal ideas, in advance of his times.

So as to promote Germany's National Unity, on the 7th of December, 1849, Carl Anton of Hohenzollern Sigmaringen, in common accord with Friedrich William of Hohenzollern Hechingen, his cousin, renounced their sovereign rights in favour of the King of Prussia. This renunciation took place with an official ceremony in which the Prince released his troops of their oath towards himself, whereupon they were sworn in to Prussia.

On accepting the sacrifice made by the elder line of the Hohenzollerns in favour of the younger branch, the King of Prussia left sovereign rights to the Fürst of Hohenzollern Sigmaringen, including the right of conferring their own House Order.

Recognizing Carl Anton's remarkable political abilities as well as his staunch patriotism, the King of Prussia in 1852 made this liberal-minded prince Prime Minister of his Government, and later he was

named Governor of the Provinces of Rhine and Westphalia, with residence at Düsseldorf.

Towards the end of his life this energetic prince was lame, and for several years had to be wheeled about in a chair, but his brain remained unclouded and masterful to the end of his days. In fact, I believe he ruled his family with a rod of iron.

Of his four sons, Leopold, Charles, Frederick and Anton, it was certainly Charles who inherited his father's political ability, and with it his iron will. Anton died a soldier's death from wounds received at the battle of Sadowa, during the war in 1866 between Prussia and Austria.

But the eldest son, Leopold, my future father-in-law, has also a curious page in history. In the year 1868 there was a revolution in Spain in which Queen Isabella was dispossessed of her throne, which was offered to Carl Anton's eldest son, Leopold. This offer was energetically refused by father and son, nor did the King of Prussia look upon it with a friendly eye, fearing complications with France. Spain then offered the throne to Frederick, Carl Anton's third son; this was also refused. These categorical refusals were principally due to the feeling of personal friendship existing between Napoleon III and the House of Hohenzollern. Carl Anton's mother had been a Murat, which explains the sympathy between the two families.

Political intrigues, however, did not stand still at this, and if those chiefly concerned stuck to their refusal, others had not ceased their underhand machinations.

In Spain the campaign was fostered by Marshal Prim, who, since the Mexican disaster, nursed a grudge against Napoleon III. But in Germany it was Bismarck, that man of iron, who was pursuing his plan of isolating France and surrounding her with enemies. All these underhand intrigues were however carefully kept from the knowledge of the two Hohenzollerns till the plan should have ripened.

In June, 1870, Bismarck managed to gain over to his point of view the King of Prussia, who thereupon called together a family council at Berlin during which, under pressure and much against their will, Carl Anton and his son Leopold were finally persuaded to accept Spain's offer.

Upon this followed the well-known scenes that those who have

studied their history books of that time will probably remember, though events are moving so quickly and so much has happened since that it is being forgotten.

At Ems old King William, who was taking a cure, on the 9th of July, 1870, received Benedetti, French Ambassador to Prussia. Benedetti pressed the King to give orders to his relations to refuse the throne of Spain. The King replied that he was not ready to do this unless it was acceptable to Carl Anton and his son. On the 11th Benedetti renewed his demand and the King gave the same answer. That same afternoon news was received that Prince Leopold had renounced his claim. Gramont, French Minister of Foreign Affairs, demanded an official renunciation, subscribed to by the Prussian Government. Benedetti asked for a third audience with the King, in which he pleaded for this and also that the King should make a declaration (which he could telegraph to Paris) that the King would in future oppose any future candidature of Leopold to the throne of Spain. This the King refused.

On the afternoon of the same day Benedetti asked to be received again. With every form of politeness the King declined to see him, but those desiring war knew how to make the King's refusal look like an insult to France, whereupon Benedetti received orders to quit Germany, and Werther, Prussian Ambassador in Paris, was asked to leave France. On July the 19th the French Chargé d'Affaires in Berlin handed in France's declaration of war on Germany. Thus had Bismarck pulled the strings according to his deep-laid plot.

Many of these incidents may have either been unknown or forgotten, therefore, whilst speaking of the Hohenzollern family I thought it useful to bring them back to memory.

Certainly Fürst Leopold had in no wise the appearance of one whose acceptance or refusal of a throne could promote a great war, for a sweeter, more peace-loving gentleman could not be conceived. It was he who was now the head of the family. He was married to Antonia, Infanta of Portugal, daughter of Queen Maria da Gloria, whose consort was also a prince of Coburg, second cousin of Queen Victoria's husband. Besides Ferdinand, they had two other sons, William, the elder, and Charles, the younger.

William, though a dear, kind-hearted fellow, had none of Ferdinand's good looks; he was inclined to stoutness, had snub features and

the characteristically eagle nose of the Hohenzollerns was conspicuously absent from his rotund and jovial face. He was full of the milk of human kindness though none too happily married to a niece of the Empress Elisabeth of Austria. This not very united couple had a two-year-old daughter and wee twin sons. The daughter was the wife of King Manuel of Portugal.

Ferdinand's youngest brother, Charles, had no lack of good looks. He had a beautifully slim figure, of which he was inordinately proud. In fact, he was inclined to be too pleased with himself and stalked about with something of a peacock's strut. He considered himself as clever as he was handsome, and I was often astounded at the way he managed to lord it over Ferdinand, who was not only his elder but his superior in every way.

A year or two later, Charles, whom the family called Carlo, married his first cousin, Josephine, Princess of Belgium (sister of Albert, the late King of the Belgians). Accustomed to admire him as a child, she continued to do so all through their married life, though she too was by far his superior. She may have had moments when she realized this, but she never showed it, so his vanity increased with the years in a way most provoking to his family. A greater contrast than the two brothers, Ferdinand and Charles, can hardly be imagined. Ferdinand was almost painfully modest and unassuming, whilst his milk-fair, wasp-waisted brother was just the contrary, and into the bargain Ferdinand was inexplicably humble before his brother's assumed perfections.

But at that first meeting I looked upon them all with uncriticizing eyes, ready to take each man at his own valuation.

As I mentioned before, my father-in-law, Fürst Leopold, was one of the most charming princes of his day. Clever, cultivated, good-loking, he had something of Ferdinand's modesty, though he was much less shy and the most perfect *homme du monde*. I have never met a more unselfish man. He lived entirely for others, spending his life and energies rushing backwards and forwards between the different members of his family, wearing himself to pieces over the care he took of his delicate wife and of his adorable old and very deaf mother whom he dearly loved.

Antonia, or Antoinette, had been one of the great beauties of her

time; one of those old-fashioned, classic-featured beauties, whom one associates with the crinoline. Her profile was Grecian, her shoulders sloping, her hands long and delicate, her feet very small and useless. But her figure somehow could not fit in with the clothes of the day, there was a disproportion between the bust and the legs. The crinoline was missing. Superbly aristocratic, she moved slowly with a curious swinging of the hips. She loved fine clothes and jewels and, though leading almost an invalid's life, was always very smartly dressed.

For several years already her health had quite broken down, and I never knew her except as an invalid who mixed only at certain hours with the other members of the family.

Our reception at the station was extremely official. Although small, the Sigmaringen court was wonderfully well run and even slightly pompous, with a good deal of ceremony. The carriages were perfectly turned out, the horses big and uniformly dark black-brown, the liveries were smart, but with all that there was a *Gemütlichkeit* about Sigmaringen which was very charming and which quite delighted Mamma, who loved all things German.

Mamma adored my father-in-law; they got on beautifully together, he was so exceedingly amiable and thoughtful and had such perfect manners; besides, he was highly cultivated, well-read and a very expert art connoisseur. All these qualities my mother appreciated to the full. Altogether Mamma was enchanted with everything, and this aristocratic and yet kindly German family was entirely to her taste. Everybody was simple and friendly, the only one who had any stiffness was Fürstin Antonia, the invalid.

Quite the most fascinating member of the family, besides Fürst Leopold, was his charming old mother, born a Princess of Baden. Small and frail, she had exquisite features framed in veils and laces which heightened their delicacy. Her gowns and cloaks were just as they should be . . . she always wore gloves much too long in the fingers, which she had not had the strength to pull on properly. Being stone-deaf she had expressive little gestures indicating when she had understood your pantomimic conversation; she liked a good joke and had a sweet way of lifting her hand and covering her mouth when amused or pleasantly shocked. Dear old Grandmamma Josephine had the most lovely nose I have ever seen; it was one of God's perfections.

My future mother-in-law's looks were a great disappointment to me. Having heard that she had been a great beauty, I was all eagerness to see her, but I could not reconcile myself to this pale-faced, pale-lipped, Grecian-nosed woman with the too small bust and too long legs. These proportions can occasionally be beautiful, but in her case, the hips being enormous, there was something about her figure which made you feel positively uncomfortable. Had I been older, I would no doubt have understood how handsome her features still were.

She was most loving and charmingly kind to me, which I later realized must have been somewhat of an effort, because, being an ardent, not to say fanatical Catholic, it was a great distress to her to have a Protestant daughter-in-law.

This, however, had not been purely a question of chance. Roumania was a Greek-Orthodox country, so its people quite naturally desired that their future king should be of their own faith. It had been one of the conditions accepted by King Carol when he became their sovereign, and knowing that a Catholic princess would never submit to this, he had married a Protestant wife, and willingly or not, Ferdinand was to do the same. Having found a bride to his taste, he did not grudge the sacrifice he was making, although being more strictly religious than his uncle, he was not sure that he was not endangering his soul, especially as his mother was persuaded that he needed the forgiveness of the Church for having overstepped her decrees.

Ferdinand was her favourite son, there was a great affinity of character between the two; besides, as is often the case, distance had minimized his faults and magnified his good qualities. For his sake I was accepted with open arms and with many demonstrations of affection; besides, I was so young and such a confiding little innocent, that I probably disarmed even those whose reason did not really accept me.

Mamma had brought all her family with her to Sigmaringen, Alfred and all four sisters, even Baby Bee, then about eight years old, who immediately became a great favourite as she was always a most amusing and clever child. If I remember rightly, Dr. X. and his wife were also with us, Dr. X. highly approving of this exquisite German atmosphere.

There is so much to relate about this time, so many events, so many

impressions, that it is difficult to choose what to put down and what to leave out. I shall try to remember what impressed me most so as to give a true picture of my sixteen-year-old mentality.

My future father and mother-in-law did not inhabit the old castle but a house in the lower part of the town which, at the rear, looked out upon a large garden and park, a house which had been theirs when their parents inhabited the old *Schloss*. Now it was the turn of the younger generation to take up their abode in their grandparents' quarters; this is generally the way with royal families; a sort of *chassé-croisé*, skipping one generation.

Both the old *Schloss* and the Fürstenbau, as my parents-in-law's house was called, were full of beautiful things. Fürst Carl Anton, the grandfather, had not only been an able statesman, but also a great lover of art, and it was thanks to his energy and knowledge that the Sigmaringen castle possessed an exceedingly interesting little museum with a valuable collection of old pictures, sculptures, missals, glass, majolica and metal-work. His sons, brought up in the love of antiquities, continued to enrich this magnificent collection. And on her side, the Infanta Antonia had inherited some beautiful old Spanish and Portuguese objects from her father, furniture, china, glass, ancient statuettes and some magnificent old silver. She had great taste and had set up her treasures to their best advantage; I would wander about amongst them enjoying their mellowed perfection, though it was many years before I really understood their value or knew how to distinguish their style and periods.

My mother-in-law was an interesting, if not altogether a lovable personality. She was profoundly artistic, an excellent painter, and deeply learned on certain subjects, such as botany, biology and natural history. But in other ways she had remained very narrow and her religion cramped instead of widening her heart, mind and sympathies. She was one of those people who knew no forgiveness of sinners unless it was imposed upon her in the confessional. She was a curious mixture of dignity and childish futility, vain, self-centred, small in her judgment of others; she had no wider sympathies. Life, with its broader human understanding, lay outside her field of comprehension. She lived in a small circle of rules, prejudices and conventions which she considered perfection. It was her love of beauty in general and of

flowers in particular that made her congenial to me. But I never dared touch upon general subjects; human conflicts she was unable to grasp, she lived so protected, so out of the world, hedged in by her Church, nursing her delicate health, everybody serving her, caring for her, spoiling her, that she was more like an old and very exigent child than a woman who had lived a real woman's life, with its temptations, conflicts, doubts, joys, passions and pain.

This I learned little by little as the years went by, for our natures were made to clash, but at that first meeting, she was merely an unexpectedly impressive, middle-aged lady who showered upon me every kindness and attention. I really think she liked me then, but there was also something else in this; I was to be shown off as favourite so as to spite Mädi, her eldest daughter-in-law. Of course then I had no idea of this, or I would have been less flattered by her manifestations of affection, but little by little I was to learn that Fürstin Antonia was a woman who could hate and resent in a way little in keeping with her religious principles, and the unfortunate Mädi was one of those who had known how to awaken her most lasting dislike.

Mädi, or Maria Theresa, born Princess Trani, was of the race of the Bavarian Wittelsbachs, and had some of their eccentricity; though exceedingly blue-blooded and occasionally even fascinating, there was something a bit odd, and not quite to be reckoned with about Mädi. Life threw us little together; she showed me neither affection nor dislike. If I had known that I was being used to emphasize the disfavour in which she was held I should have done everything to make friends, for my whole soul would have revolted against being unfairly played off against her.

Ever so many years later, in the only heart-to-heart talk we ever had together, she confessed to me that she had imagined that I had been conscious of the way I was being used to humiliate her. This was a horrible revelation to me, and by the pain I felt I think she was convinced that I had been utterly unaware of my mother-in-law's tactics. But the harm had been done.

Later I myself went through the process of being the fallen favourite, when Fürstin Antonia raised Josephine, her third daughter-in-law, to that short-lived position. How long she occupied it I cannot say, for there was no fourth son to get married, and in later years I went more

seldom to Sigmaringen, anyhow never for long periods; besides, I had other, deeper troubles to face.

Somehow, Mädi could not fit in with the Hohenzollern family; she seemed actually to take pleasure in shocking them whenever she could. To all outward appearances her husband was patient and long-suffering, but they drifted apart, as their characters were fundamentally different. Mädi, without being good-looking, had what the French call *beaucoup de race*. She was exceedingly thin, with pale blue eyes and a pathetic voice. Her health was not robust and she was quite an invalid, wheeled about in a chair, before she died at the age of forty-two. In those days she hardly ever came to Sigmaringen, and the saddest thing of all was that she saw very little of her children, to whom she was mother in name more than in fact, which made them rather sad and lonely little creatures. Mädi's one great love was her mother, Countess Trani, sister of the Empress Elizabeth of Austria, of the Queen of Naples and of the Duchess of Alençon. Countess Trani had the same wonderful figure as the Empress, tall, upright and incredibly slim; she was, however, much less beautiful. She too was a lover of solitude, somewhat of a hermit, living far away from her kind, proud, original, aristocratic, but difficult to get on with, a peculiarity her daughter had inherited.

Poor Mädi, she was a pathetic figure that but seldom crossed my path. We lived too far apart.

The country around Sigmaringen is varied and attractive and the rocky valley of the Danube is even very beautiful.

The afternoon of our arrival we were all taken for a lovely drive through this valley, a drive which ended with tea at a delicious little place belonging to the family called "Inzighoven." This had formerly been a convent, I think. There was an old house no longer in use, a church and several lovely gardens, one of which was enclosed by high walls against which apples, pears, peaches and apricots had been trained. There were also masses of flowers and I revelled in this garden.

How well I remember that tea-party. Fürstin Antonia, who never drove with other people, had arrived first by a short cut and received us at a large round table almost breaking beneath its spread of tempting food. The Sigmaringen teas and breakfasts were regular feasts. I

have never tasted better toast and *Galettes*, *Knüppel*, *Käse* and *Ziebelkuchen*—besides no end of different kinds of rusks, biscuits, *Lebkuchen* and *Prätzeln*, than at Sigmaringen. My mother-in-law being, because of her poor health, a capricious eater, every sort of good thing was set before her so as to tempt her appetite. Nothing loath, we fell to and ate with the healthy relish of our age. I can still see sister Baby stuffing for all she was worth and Alfred trying one excellent cake after another, whilst Mamma was being amiable with the elder members of the family. And over this happy scene the spring sun shone in all its glory.

I was learning to call my bridegroom Nando, for it was thus he was known in the family. He was emotionally enchanted to show me his old home, with all his favourite haunts. Besides, he was shyly delighted to present his bride to all those, high and low, who belonged in any way to the household; old family servants and retainers, functionaries, ladies-in-waiting, former governesses and tutors. But although his heart expanded with joy, all the same I detected a certain underlying sadness; the sadness of one who was already a little bit of a guest in his *Elternhaus*, for had he not been expatriated so as to create a new home in a far-off country in which he was only just learning to live?

I felt this through everything—a certain anxiety, with just a touch of dread. He was beginning to tell me about Roumania, but he had not the gift of expression. All he related was a bit halting, evoked no real pictures, and though I did not understand it then, he spoke of it always somewhat as a schoolboy on a holiday would speak of school. There was a sound of chains about it somewhere. Here at Sigmaringen he felt free, loved, his heart expanded, he breathed freely; what was it that he was trying to make me understand about that far-off country? Was he less free there? Was it not a beautiful, wonderful country, a country of poetry and romance? But always that note of anxiety when he talked about it which stirred something in me I could not understand; it was rather like a sound of warning. Was it difficult to live in a far country?

And as an echo coming back again and again, *der Onkel*,—he seemed to sign each picture, to be at the end of each road, at the core of each plan. . . . Was it perhaps *der Onkel* who inspired this sort of dread?



MY MOTHER-IN-LAW, FÜRSTIN ANTONIA OF
HOHENZOLLERN, BORN INFANTA OF
PORTUGAL



MY FATHER-IN-LAW, FÜRST LEOPOLD OF
HOHENZOLLERN, IN THE ROBES OF
THE BLACK EAGLE



KING CAROL OF ROUMANIA

And in a few days *der Onkel* would be coming; coming all the long way from Roumania to look at Nando's bride. And Nando clung to me as one who sees a shadow advancing which might darken in some way his newly found happiness.

Der Onkel! What would he be like? What would he think of me?

The most sunshiny Fool's Paradise cannot persuade time to stand still. A few blissful days of pleasurable enjoyment amidst people set upon making you feel happy and at home, and then the dreaded morning dawned; *der Onkel* was arriving to-day.

High and low donned their best attire, Mamma had carefully told us what to put on, and she came herself to see that each detail was carried out as she desired. We felt that even she was just a little excited and nervous. But she tried to cheer us up and give us courage with brave words.

The little town was all astir with distant sounds of music, the pattering of hurrying feet along the pavement, little snatches of conversation, and, looking out of the window, I saw for the first time the Roumanian flag; blue, yellow and red, more cheerful than beautiful, but there it fluttered as though proud of its uprightness; three colours that were to play such a tremendous part in my life. . . .

But the terrible moment could not be put off; we had all gathered together at the station. Nando in his Roumanian Chasseur's uniform, very nervous, very loving. I can still feel the touch of his long fingers on my arm; an anxious touch; Nanda had his mother's beautiful hands, but like hers they had something a little groping about them. We looked at each other, he tried to give me a smile of encouragement, but I read again that curious dread in his eyes. And then the train puffed in. . . .

Der Onkel was there! The first impression was slightly disillusioning. I had seen several pictures of King Carol; his dark, impressive, rather austere face, aquiline nose, black beard, and penetrating eyes had for some reason made me imagine him tall and imposing, but this was an entirely wrong picture. King Carol was short of stature and at first sight not at all impressive except for his self-assured, decided and at the same time dignified attitude, and his roaming, all-seeing, rather

small and often bloodshot blue eyes. King Carol could see everything without turning his head, like an eagle. One might say that his eyes flickered and snapped.

But this I did not observe at first; he simply seemed to me rather a short man with somewhat incurved knees, his feet in thick-soled boots exceedingly firmly planted on the ground. Unlike his almost nervously amiable brother, the Fürst, who seemed for ever eager to propitiate the world and all men therein, he was almost exaggeratedly calm and self-contained. His movements were slow and deliberate, with a sort of conscious majesty which had become his usual attitude, the movements of a man who, having himself completely under control, can also control and master others. But for all that, the first sight of *der Onkel* did not at all come up to my young expectations. He looked severe but in no wise imposing. In fact, he was a disappointment.

He embraced me with much cordiality, and was exceedingly amiable with my mother, but there was none of his brother's warm effusion about him; he was above all a self-contained, masterful man, full of his own dignity, and aware of his importance; a self-made man in fact.

Curiously enough I have entirely forgotten who the King had in his suite on that first visit. I suppose there were too many impressions pressing in upon me, more emotions than my young heart could contain. My bridegroom and I were too much wrapped up in ourselves; we were discovering each other. Nando could not bear me out of his sight; after rather hard and lonely times he had found his happiness and he clung to it in a way that deeply touched me. He was hungry for affection, for something all to himself. He always wanted to be alone with me and suffered because of the many others who claimed their share. I was ready to give him all I could, but half of me was hankering after Ducky, the companion of my whole life, and this new love was pulling me in another direction. I felt something of a traitor towards my sister, and this was tearing me in two. All through life that curious sensation has followed me; that feeling of being torn to pieces by the too many who wanted my affection.

I believe Mamma had many discussions with Uncle and my father-in-law about our wedding and all the different arrangements, contracts,

plans, etc., with which no one worried me. I was in fact magnificently unconscious that there *were* any difficulties and problems. I was much too young, a child not out of her teens, unsuspecting and credulous, ready to take each man at his face value and believing that all dreams could come true.

Roumania was a land of Romance, a land of Promise, a land of high mountains, deep valleys and ocean-wide plains, a land of song and poetry, of dark-eyed peasants in picturesque costumes, a far-off land near the Rising Sun.

And Nando and I were two loving companions advancing towards perfect bliss, towards plenitude and fulfilment, beneath the kindly, indulgent smiles of those who were going to make our road easy for us and our life all joy. Thus the dream. . . .

We would sit together hand in hand in any corner where we could be alone, and the love I read in Nando's eyes meant nothing to me but a promise of perfect happiness; I was moved by no anxiety and my extreme immaturity did not even make me wish to inquire more deeply into the real meaning of marriage. And whilst I was thus living in a world of the most complete unreality, our elders were solving difficult problems and preparing our future with the deliberation of those whose eyes are no more veiled by illusions.

The religious question was difficult, as the Pope would not agree that our children, if we were to be blessed with any, should be christened in the Orthodox Faith. Nando's marriage with a Protestant was already straining relations with Rome, so the greatest tact was necessary and goodness only knows what deputies were being sent to propitiate the Pontiff of Pontiffs.

And things were further complicated because Grandmamma Queen wished me to be married in St. George's Chapel, Windsor, according to tradition, all her English grandchildren having been married there; but as there was to be both a Protestant and a Catholic marriage, neither Church would admit that their ceremony should be the second, so the idea of a Windsor marriage had to be given up, much to my disappointment. Being a British-born princess, I would have liked to marry in the land of my birth under dear old Queen Victoria's wing; it would have been a happy send-off. Added to all these difficulties there was still another; the dissolute state of old Duke Ernest's court made it impossible

for the marriage to be celebrated at Coburg, so finally, after several months' debate, it was settled that the ceremony should take place at Sigmaringen, a solution I personally did not really care about.

Being only sixteen at the time of my engagement it was found necessary to prolong it till I was seventeen, which would be in October; so the marriage was fixed for January the 10th, which would give time for everybody to look about and prepare for the great event. I was well content with this arrangement and in no hurry to throw myself headlong into the unknown.

During our stay at Sigmaringen, it was arranged that we should come together with the Emperor William at the Burg Hohenzollern, *Stamschloss* of both branches of the family. The Kaiser desired to manifest his goodwill towards this elder but no longer reigning line of the same house, and besides it was a pleasant way of meeting the King of Roumania without too great formality.

The Hohenzollern Schloss lies in lonely majesty on a hill rising quite suddenly and unexpectedly out of the flat lands of Swabia. First built round about the years 1061-95, it has but few vestiges left of the original stronghold, and it has been rather floridly restored with much false Gothic, but the position is magnificent and, seen from below, its many pointed towers rise proudly above the woods which clothe the cone-shaped hill it crowns. From above, the view is superb; in proud majesty the fortress looks down upon the plain beneath, remembering, perhaps, the days when it gloriously abused its feudal rights.

Both branches of the Hohenzollerns have equal rights to this castle, erected by their mutual forbears, and this was an excellent occasion for manifesting their reciprocal goodwill, more especially as our engagement had taken place beneath the Kaiser's Imperial roof. Fürst Leopold was always eager to prove that loyalty towards the reigning house of Prussia which his father had so unselfishly promoted. But King Carol was less effusive and his feelings for his young kinsman were never very warm and sometimes even wanting in cordiality.

I do not remember much about our somewhat overpowering cousin on that occasion; fiancés are not very observant, they have eyes only for each other. One small incident however I shall never forget, as it was characteristic of much which was to follow.



THE BURG HOHENZOLLERN



AS A BRIDE, IN THE ROUMANIAN DRESS SENT ME BY THE
KING OF ROUMANIA

As on that other occasion of our betrothal at Potsdam, speeches were made, but this time less officially, for if I remember rightly we were only a family party. The Kaiser proposed the King of Roumania's health, the Fürst, I think, proposed my mother's; we were of course seated side by side, Nando pleasurablely elated, as he too had loyal feelings towards the Kaiser, and was amongst those who never ran him down, even when it became quite the right thing to do. *Der Onkel*, superbly aware of his importance in the balance of our destinies, then turned towards us and, raising his glass, looked at his nephew, and with a smile full of meaning said: "Let me drink to your 'honey day'" (*Honigtag*).

"Honey day!" I saw Nando turn pale; he politely raised his glass in answer, but his hand was trembling and from that moment he lost all his gaiety, became silent, abstracted and looked thoroughly miserable. As soon as we got up from table, he drew me into a corner and with troubled eyes and quivering nostrils he asked me: "Did you hear?" "Hear what?" "He said a '*Honigtag*.'" "Well, why not? He seemed very kind and full of goodwill." "Why not? Don't you understand what he means? He means that instead of a honeymoon he will only allow us a honey day! That's just how he is—he does not care for or understand other people's feelings. With Uncle it is all work and no play, year in year out, all through the seasons. He never cared about a honeymoon for himself; he is not made like other people, he is all duty and no weakness and expects everybody to be the same. It's always like that; everything has to be sacrificed. He has no feeling nor understanding for the wants and desires of the young. When it is a question of state he is absolutely pitiless!"

There were actually tears in Nando's eyes. Unable to understand this outbreak of despair, I did my poor best to console him, but he kept repeating: "He means it, you'll see. Uncle's jokes are always bitter earnest." But just then I could not understand the real suffering which lay beneath the poor young man's words.

Later I understood.

Another difficult moment was approaching, the visit to England, to present ourselves before Papa, before Grandmamma. . . .

All the time I had a sad little feeling underlying my newfound happi-

ness, the feeling that Papa would be disappointed and perhaps others as well. My betrothed was a complete stranger, and therefore quite foreign to that life that was once mine, a stranger to all the beloved Malta atmosphere, to all, in fact, from which I had sprung. I felt a little bit of a traitor somehow, so that all Nando's loving ardour and Mamma's smiles and reassurances could not make me feel entirely happy.

The moments in life when one has to take absolute decisions have something grim about them. It means clenching your teeth and setting your face towards that which you have chosen, for better or worse, with no looking back or side alleviations; but there are certain heart-strings that ache for all one's courage. So it was with me; I had cast in my lot with a stranger, I was setting out upon an unknown sea, burning my boats behind me, quitting the old harbour for a new one of which I knew nothing, and that at the age of sixteen.

There was heartache in it, intolerable heartache, especially as my English family was, and still is, terribly exclusive and only grudgingly opens its doors to strangers unless it can quite absorb them. I knew that in a way my choice set me outside the fortress in which until now I had had my place. But it had to be faced, loyally, courageously faced; but how cruelly difficult it is to be loyal all round.

This I felt to the point of torture, and it was a torture I could not share with the one who was carrying me off; he could not have understood it, and if he had, it would have darkened his joy. So I hid my inner desolation as best I could, bracing myself for each new meeting; Papa, Grandmamma, all the uncles, aunts and cousins, with George in particular, George, most cherished chum of the beloved Malta days, and all the naval friends who I imagined would look upon me as one betraying her original loyalties. Yes, I suffered, but none, except Ducky perhaps, knew to what an extent, but the die had been cast, there was nothing for it but to go straight ahead.

Papa said very little, though his face was rather glum. He busily set about making all practical arrangements, a great alleviation at times when the heart is sore. He avoided talking to me in private, and child-like I was relieved at this attitude. But the old home was no longer quite the old home. . . .

We had arrived in London ahead of the King of Roumania, who was

to have his own reception. If I remember rightly, it was at Windsor that we were all to meet. But in those days I had nothing to do with the planning and settling of things, I just did what I was told and seldom discussed or protested or asked for the why or wherefore. I had the feeling of being part of a relentless organization which was sweeping me forward according to a plan not of my own making, nor under my control. I accepted the decisions made for me as I accepted the ruling forces that stood behind me then. I was a trustful, unthinking, though not unfeeling, little innocent, with entirely erroneous ideas about life. But this explains why I only remember clearly those events or episodes in which I was personally concerned; they stand out as separate pictures while the rest has faded away.

Here are a few pictures.

I am standing with my shy bridegroom and other members of the family in the beautiful, broad, curving Windsor corridor so full of beautiful pictures and statues which we delighted in, and where Grandmamma liked to receive her guests before meals. Tap, tap; one could hear the sound of Grandmamma's stick before she came round the corner and also the rustle of her stiff silk gown . . . tap, tap. . . . And there she was, wee and smiling and rather shy, with teeth small like those of a mouse, and a deliciously modulated voice when she addressed the young German prince in his native tongue. I see her looking up at him and asking him about his parents, "Die ich so lieb habe," and telling him that she always has a picture of his mother in her own private room. "Sie war so wunderschön." And the young man shyly bows and his eyelids quiver and he is terribly on his best behaviour, and, being naturally sympathetic, especially when anybody is going through an ordeal, I understand all his feelings and am shy with him, hot and cold in turns. . . .

Then it is evening, I have my best dress on; again we are in the corridor waiting for the Queen. Other guests have arrived at the Castle, amongst others Cousin George. I believe Uncle Bertie¹ was there also, but I only remember Cousin George. . . .

It is the first time we meet since I have decided for the new harbour; since I have burnt my boats behind me. My heart is beating, all these meetings with beloved old friends are difficult, and I have always that

¹ King Edward VII.

sick feeling at heart that I am in some ways betraying all the things I had loved. . . .

"Well, Missy?" Cousin George is very kind and very sweet and I have a lump in my throat. We avoid speaking of the dear Malta days, for I could not have stood it just then, not at that moment when I had set my face towards a far, far land. . . .

But here is a sweetly comic picture, not meant to be comic, but comic for all that.

Queen Victoria had at that period a great favourite, an Indian, whom everyone called the Munshi. Grandmamma had a great predilection for Indians and all things pertaining to India; was she not Empress of India? Besides, she said that Indians were quite perfect servants, so quick, so noiseless, with soft, deft movements. With a shy little smile she explained: "They are so clever when they help me out of my chair, or into a carriage, they never pinch me!" and which of us does not know how uncomfortable too eager helping hands can be and how often have we not been "pinched" by those imagining themselves most dexterous?

The Munshi was a sort of Indian secretary to the Queen and gave her Indian lessons. Some have declared that his royal mistress treated him with more consideration than his caste entitled him to; of this I am no judge, but the fact remains that the Munshi had an envied position; a house, a wife, Indian servants and the permission to slaughter animals according to the rites prescribed by his religion. This privilege much complicated the Queen's journeys when she moved with the Munshi in her train, and it can easily be imagined what a superlative annoyance it was to those members of her household who did not appreciate him.

I personally recollect the difficulties raised by this right of the Munshi's to slaughter his food within his own courts, on an occasion when the Queen transported herself to Darmstadt to visit her grandchildren of Hesse (children of her second daughter, Princess Alice, who had died when her children were quite young), and that a habitation had to be found within the boundaries of which the Munshi could observe the rituals imposed upon him by his faith.

The Munshi, having heard that a foreign prince had come to ask for the hand of one of the "Empress of India's" granddaughters, forthwith

expressed the desire to make the acquaintance of the honoured stranger, and these are the scenes following upon the favourite's request.

"My dear Missy, the Munshi would like to make Ferdinand's acquaintance."

"Certainly, Grandmamma, when and where do you desire them to meet?"

"In my room, dear child," and as usual Grandmamma shrugged her shoulders, smiled her shy little smile and indicated the hour when I was to appear with my bridegroom in her private apartments.

Punctually, according to the great little Old Lady's desire, my bridegroom and I appeared in Her Majesty's inner sanctuary. She was sitting at her writing-table; as usual the air was sweet with that scent of orange flowers peculiar to her rooms. And there indeed upon an easel stands the lovely portrait of Nando's mother, Antonia, painted at the period of her greatest beauty. Winterhalter had posed her in profile, doing every honour to her faultlessly classical features, to her sloping shoulders and to the slight pout of the lower lip; a superb beauty indeed, with her hair drawn away from her low forehead and arranged in a "chignon" of curls at the back like certain Greek statues. I gazed at it, but did not know in those days how to appreciate that severe type of beauty, preferring the loveliness of Aunt Alix or Cousin Ella. It was because of Antonia's connexion with the Coburg family that Grandmamma possessed this wonderful portrait of her. Graciously the Queen pointed to the portrait, showed her wee teeth in a very captivating smile and said: "*Wunderschön.*" "*Wunderschön,*" repeated my timid bridegroom and the conversation was at an end. A click of a door-handle and there on the threshold stood the Munshi, an Indian idol all clothed in gold, with a white turban on his head, for he had donned festive apparel for the occasion. He did not step into the room but remained framed in the doorway. Putting his hand to his heart, lips and forehead, he saluted us Eastern-wise and then froze into immobility.

In those days I possessed no social ease, I was simply a silly little girl, at home in a garden, on horseback or in a circle of friends, but I had no idea of how to aid shy people; Grandmamma and Nando were hopelessly shy, and the Munshi, of course, was an Oriental; he manifested no sort of emotion at all, simply waiting in Eastern dignity for those things that were to come to pass. But nothing came to pass. Nan-

do had no idea what was expected of him and so simply stared at the enigmatic apparition, standing in dumb golden glory in the doorway, whilst Grandmamma kept hunching up her shoulders and smiling as though her smiles could make something happen. Finally, I believe, it was I who courageously went up to the Munshi and shook hands with him, Nando following my lead, after which Grandmamma, feeling that she had satisfied the favourite's whim by allowing him a glimpse of the royal bridegroom, was only too glad to pronounce the ceremony at an end and to be relieved of the presence of the tongue-tied fiancés, who themselves were only too pleased to escape.

It remains an everlasting regret to me that I never knew Grandmamma Queen more intimately. Having flown from beneath her wings almost as a child, and later being kept very much secluded in the country of my adoption, I had little occasion for knowing her when I had grown to an age of greater consciousness. But talking of Grandmamma's atmosphere I am tempted to insert here two scenes which belong to a later date.

The first, though, leads us back to Osborne, Grandmamma's summer residence.

I was then about twenty, but already had two children, and Grandmamma had lent me one of her small cottages so that my little ones could spend a season near the sea which had been the delight of my childhood.

I will not here mention the extraordinary happiness it was to be back again at Osborne; that can only be understood if one has known exportation. . . .

Here, following her usual "clock-like" habits, Grandmamma took her afternoon drive every day and was always accompanied by a member of the family, if available, or otherwise by a lady-in-waiting. On the memorable occasion I am about to relate, I was the chosen one and it was to be a *tête-à-tête* drive. I believe that some to whom the pleasure of these drives was too repeatedly offered, came to dread them as they were always long and often chilly, but for me they had the charm of rarity and were therefore quite an event.

Well do I remember this drive; I felt elated with the elation of one out on a voyage of discovery, but I was also shy and not a little nerv-

ous. I had become almost a stranger to Grandmamma; besides, was she not censor and critic of all our lives, carefully following up the career of all her daughters or granddaughters scattered through the different countries of Europe? I knew that searching questions would be put; Grandmamma would certainly try to learn all about me, and it had therefore been planned that we should be alone together during this drive.

I think that this was the sole occasion when Grandmamma and I had a really intimate talk. At first our conversation was somewhat halting, for we were both shy and I was too tremendously on my good behaviour and dared not treat the royal little Old Lady as though she were a real flesh-and-blood grandmother. In fact I kept wondering how much she could understand of youthful or even everyday human emotions; were not all her woman's perceptions smothered beneath her too great royalty?

Gradually, however, our mutual reserve began to melt and I found myself answering her questions with animation; besides, she had a sweet way of laughing at unexpected moments, a silvery, really amused little laugh, and this laugh bridged some of the distance between us. She asked me about the country I had gone to, about the climate, the people, their habits, their politics. She asked about Uncle and Aunt, much interested in Carmen Sylva, the poet-queen, who had once visited her at Balmoral, and of whom she had kept an affectionate remembrance. She asked, of course, about my husband, hoping that I was a good and obedient wife; she was even interested in the servants. Grandmamma was always exceedingly full of thoughtfulness for her servants, it was a really royal tradition which she expected to find also in other royal houses; had she not often been served by three generations of the one and same family? And then turning towards me she suddenly sprang this question upon me: "Did they give you chloroform when your children were born?"

Oh dear, why did she ask me this? Was she one of those people who disapproved of a woman's hour of travail being eased, thanks to the inventions of modern science? Did she believe in the curse of Eve and that through the ages women must submit to it without protest, according to the Ancient Word, no matter how the world advanced? Or like Carmen Sylva, did she consider that bringing a child into the world

was a moment of such poetical rapture that nothing must be allowed to alloy the ecstasy of its pain?

I felt the blood rush to my cheeks, felt my throat become dry. Courage! Confess that you had been given a whiff of chloroform, that Mamma and the English doctor had insisted upon this, although the Roumanian doctors were as much against it as their poet-queen. In quite a small voice I therefore confessed that although I had not actually been put to sleep, towards the end the edge of my suffering had been taken from me by that blessed anæsthetic.

And now for the scolding, for the sermon, for the expression of the royal lady's scorn; for Queen Victoria, no doubt, was a Spartan and would wholeheartedly despise me for my cowardliness. But what was my astonishment when I heard a sweet, crystalline peal of laughter, and Grandmamma, with that almost apologetic shrug of her shoulders, declared: "Quite right, my dear, I was only given chloroform with my ninth and last baby, it had, alas! not been discovered before, and I assure you, my child, I deeply deplore the fact that I had to bring eight children into the world without its precious aid!"

I heaved a sigh of relief! She was human, dear little Old Lady! She terrified everybody, spread an atmosphere of awe around her, but for all that she was human, delightfully human. She did not expect you to be a hero every day of your life. Shut away in her regal abodes, surrounded by subjects who always lowered their voices when they addressed her, hedged in by honours, by the ceremonious respect of those who served her as well as by her own desire of aloofness, there was all the same, beneath that outward pomp and unapproachableness, a real human understanding of everyday pain, fear or joy.

Perhaps she occasionally yearned for a more personal touch with people and things: with life . . . perhaps.

And this is the second little incident I also want to relate before returning to where I left off my tale, because this also brings her humanly near; it took place a few years later than that Osborne drive.

Towards the end of her life, Queen Victoria, who, for endless decades, because of her widowhood, had shut herself away from all worldly amusements, began to take a great interest in theatrical art, opera, drama or comedy.

As she never deigned to go to a theatre, the good idea was conceived of organizing private representations in one of the big Windsor halls. In this way, without leaving her own abode, Her Majesty could nevertheless enjoy the very best stage performances, which gave great pleasure to the performers as well as to the royal recluse.

So unspoilt was dear Grandmamma in all things concerning amusements, that her joy and interest in these performances was almost child-like. Of all the audience in the stately hall, no one was more pleasurably excited than the great little Old Lady.

During one of my rare visits to England after my marriage, I witnessed one of these performances. Being the guest of honour that evening, I had been placed on the Queen's right, Grandmamma throned upon a low arm-chair, her stiff silken gown spread out all about her, her two hands resting upon the jewelled handle of her stick. She was in full evening dress, with uncovered shoulders and many diamonds which glittered and sparkled whenever she moved. So low did she sit that, when answering her questions, I had to lean far down towards her. Shy and self-conscious as I was in those early days, this made me cruelly uncomfortable, especially as I felt the many criticizing eyes of different members of the family heavily upon me. I had become almost a stranger to them, they were on their guard, and were watching me closely, I was being weighed for what I was worth. What had I become since I had gone to live amongst foreigners? I was also almost painfully conscious of the exquisite perfection of Grandmamma's sober but magnificent court and of the guests assembled for the occasion. A more dignified, yea almost terrifyingly irreproachable company could not be imagined. I had left England before I was really "out" and the court to which I had gone, although severe to the point of austerity, had none of this glittering ceremony and magnificence, so I was nervous, never before having been as a grown-up within these ancestral halls, nor as a guest of any importance. Now I was Crown Princess of a foreign country and had to play up to the part under the severe criticism of those I had forsaken, and very keenly was I made to feel that I was now outside the fortress. . . .

The curtain went up. The representation happened to be *Carmen*, an opera quite familiar to me, but which the Queen was witnessing for the first time. We were sitting very near the stage and I noticed that

Grandmamma was not only following the music with keen interest, but also the plot of the play. Somewhat bewildered by the passionate story, she kept asking me questions, which were not easy to answer owing to the loudness of the music and the unequal heights of our chairs.

Grandmamma was evidently enjoying it. She shrugged her shoulders from time to time and there was a half-smile on her lips.

The first act over she turned to me for fuller explanations about the story. With a very young woman's diffidence I tried to impart to my grandparent my knowledge of Carmen's rather wild tale. Grandmamma's shy little smile broadened, this was the sort of story that did not often reach her ears. She kept nodding her head to what her granddaughter was explaining, but all the while the granddaughter was uncomfortably conscious of those many pairs of eyes boring into her innocent back. Grandmamma was certainly enjoying the evening more than I was; it was not altogether comfortable coming back to the old home as an official guest.

The curtain went up for the second act. Carmen with her smuggler associates was becoming wilder and wilder. I no longer remember who was singing the part, but her acting was as good as her voice so that she was indeed fascinating to watch. The irresistible "Toreador" made his entry which gave Carmen the occasion to exert her wiles, which were followed by her passionate display of temper when poor Don José hears the trumpet call of duty and tries for the last time to save his soldier's honour. It was all very realistic; most of us in the room had seen it before, but to Grandmamma it was an exciting revelation. Leaning towards me, her eyes full of dawning comprehension, she nevertheless presses me for further explanations which, with flaming cheeks, I give as best I can. Grandmamma raises her fan to her face, she is delightfully, pleasurably scandalized, but she understands; leaning towards me, her fan still over her mouth, she whispers: "But then, oh my dear child, I am afraid she's really not very nice!"

Dear old Grandmamma! No, Carmen was certainly not very nice, her morals were abominable, not at all in keeping with your irreproachable court, but all the same how you enjoyed the excitement of being so deliciously shocked!

But now back again to my Windsor of 1892.

The chief event was the arrival of the King of Roumania who was duly received with every honour and given the Order of the Garter. Unfortunately I have no memory of Grandmamma and Uncle together. I wish I had been more interested in what was going on, but I can but repeat that I was merely a foolish little girl in those days and both Nando and I had but one idea, to get out of all official ceremonies as much as we could so as to have quiet hours together. But occasionally the nephew talked out of school and it was thus confided to me that *der Onkel*, accustomed to uniform, was much put out at having to wear *escarpins* (knee-breeches) for the Windsor dinner. Plain clothes in general were unfamiliar to him, and this special form of dress in particular so much perturbed him that he had declared to his heir that he absolutely must wear woollen stockings under his silk hose, or he would catch cold! Of course we youngsters were hugely amused at this, and when Uncle appeared, correctly attired, with the Garter round his knee, we kept gazing at his legs to see if the woollen stockings were noticeable.

Another great amusement was old Ion Kalinderu in this formal get-up. Ion Kalinderu was head of the Roumanian Crown Domains and first dignitary of King Carol's court, a gentleman in whom the King had the greatest confidence and who was destined to play a large part in our young lives. He served for love instead of money and was therefore treated with great regard by his king. As Kalinderu was fond of royal honours Uncle nearly always managed to have him in his suite on important occasions. Worthy and admirable though he undoubtedly was, Ion Kalinderu was a figure the caricaturist's pencil could never resist. Small, rotund, with a close-cropped beard and a nose of pronounced Semitic proportions, he had a sly twinkle in an eye which was almost too intelligent. Ion Kalinderu was faithful, devoted and hard-working, but he was also extremely aware of his virtues, and this gave him an important, self-satisfied air which was a chronic temptation to cartoonists. Nando's feelings towards him at that period were a queer mixture of grateful affection and nervous respect; for Kalinderu possessed what is termed "the King's ear."

Kalinderu in knee-breeches was a quaint figure indeed and it must be confessed he looked very small in this feudal setting, but he was one of those people who felt at home wherever he was. He, so to say, carried

his importance everywhere with him, which made him feel at home even at Windsor, and it was indeed amusing to watch the self-satisfied little gentleman, taking everything in, weighing, appraising, estimating men and objects with that small, watchful, almost cunning eye of his.

It was a great hour in Ion Kalinderu's life when he was presented to the legendary old lady who was Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, Empress of India. Although I have lost every mental picture of Uncle and Grandmamma together, I do still see the head of the Crown Domains of Roumania, bending down to kiss her Royal and Imperial Majesty's hand. Even at that impressive moment, Ion Kalinderu's eye still roamed as though looking round the corner for fear of missing anything.

A greater contrast than Kalinderu and the Queen of England's tall, thin and sometimes dry, but uniformly irreproachably turned-out gentlemen-in-waiting, cannot be conceived; but Kalinderu held his own, no solemn grandeur could shake his self-complacency, and when he screwed his eye-glass into his eye to examine the many-centuries-old treasures of Windsor, it was with the superior air of a connoisseur, of one who knows all about precious collections, for was not he, Ion Kalinderu, creating a museum which after his death would be left to the nation, so that his name should pass down to posterity? No one could take *him* in.

Thus was Ion Kalinderu.

CHAPTER XI

CARMEN SYLVA

AFTER the Windsor visit, the King of Roumania remained a few days in London, where he had not been since his extreme youth, and his time was employed in interviewing important people and in visiting useful and interesting institutions such as the Bank of England, the Mint, the London Docks, etc., and he earnestly pressed his nephew to do the same. But his nephew was in love with his bride and would not hear of the docks nor the Mint, nor the Bank of England. This conflict much amused my mother, and she kept teasing my bridegroom, putting searching questions to him about what really *were* his interests. I can still see the expression of her eyes as she did this; she was not quite certain if she sympathized with the hard old statesman or with the unwilling nephew. She abhorred idleness, but then the young man was in love with her own daughter and that was a point in his favour, although an interest in his bride and in the Bank of England need not necessarily clash. "He never was in love himself," the young man declared, "so he does not understand; I am here to be happy—not to be dragged about looking at State institutions," and of course I considered it quite natural to be preferred to the Mint or the London Docks!

Finally the King of Roumania, having absorbed important knowledge to his heart's content, and seen interesting people, departed to his far country, where his obedient nephew would soon be obliged to rejoin him, whilst we all went off to Devonport where my father still had his naval command.

Everything was now saturated with that sad feeling of leave-taking, each friend became more precious, each place more dear because they were being relinquished.

Roumania was little known in those days, and strange and comic questions were put to me; some even thought that Turkish-wise I should have to wear a veil over my face! I knew that I should not have to do this, but I myself had a very hazy vision of Roumania and could give anxious friends little information about what awaited me in the new home.

King Carol had brought the bride and her sisters some lovely Roumanian peasant costumes; they were the only tangible thing we had from that country in the "Near East." They were marvellously embroidered with gold and silk and we often donned this picturesque garb for the benefit of those eager to grasp where I was really going; but I do not know that these beautiful dresses helped to give them a more precise picture of the map of Europe.

With the eagerness of one whose days are numbered, I threw myself into all the joys of yore, swimming, rowing, boating and those wild romps with our three friends in General Harrison's garden, perhaps not entirely in keeping with a bride's dignity.

Wedding presents came pouring in and everybody united to spoil me in every way and to make me feel how much they regretted my going; there were even timid admirers who gave me to understand that their hearts were slightly broken, and all this kept me in a state of emotional excitement in which smiles were lined with tears.

A sweetly comic remembrance is of a young man who, the season before, had shown me marked attention, and now wanted, at a tea-party given in our honour by his parents, bravely to celebrate my departure to a foreign land, by acting charades. The word chosen was Roumania, which was divided up into syllables, but when the whole was to be represented he found himself in a cruel fix; what and where was Roumania? I can still see him pretending to be a schoolmaster giving a geography lesson in which the name of Roumania was to be pronounced, and it makes me smile to remember his confusion when it came to the crucial moment and after a certain shy confusion he asked his so-called pupils: "Can one of you tell me . . . hum . . . the name . . . hum . . . the name . . . of that town in Hungary . . ."

Town in Hungary—oh, dear! Even then I was shocked at that conception of my future country, but I was only aware later of what an insult it was!

To-day I still possess a lovely set of antique silver coffee spoons, the handles of which are crowned with wee silver ships, a wedding present given to me by the artless young man and his family, the father having been an admiral, and whenever I use these spoons I think of that comic conception about Roumania.

As far as I remember the autumn of that last year at home was divided up between visits to the Rosenau, Coburg, and Sigmaringen, but only certain scenes stand out clearly.

As soon as Nando could escape from military and other duties in Roumania he hurried back to his bride, and the last months of our engagement were spent in getting somewhat better acquainted with each other. But looking back I realize that on my side all my feelings, ideas and visions were based upon an entirely erroneous conception of life. I was happy in a slightly troubled way. I was strangely incurious. I did not fear the future, I was too much a born optimist and idealist to fear anything, but it was all so hazy and I was so absolutely excluded from all-important discussions. My mother, according to our present conception of things, was almost absurdly anxious that I should understand nothing about the realities of life. I was to be led utterly innocent up to the altar and in this she succeeded marvellously. Looking back I cannot conceive how it was done. But there were occasional moments when it suddenly came to me that Nando and I had not perhaps exactly the same tastes about everything nor had we been educated in entirely the same way. In my simple acceptance of things, I somehow imagined that everybody was brought up with the same tastes, the same convictions, the same habits and manners, and that Mamma's attitude towards life, religion, education and all the rest, was the prototype universally followed by all royal families. It was therefore somewhat of a shock when occasionally my bridegroom and I did not understand everything absolutely in the same way.

My sister Ducky once pronounced a very true word: "To be entirely happy in marriage, the same things must be important to both." A simple word, but a tremendous truth lies at the bottom of it.

All through life I have remembered this word of hers, pronounced when she was quite a young woman. Well, even in those early days of courting, all things were not always equally important to us. We chil-

dren had been brought up to a certain English feeling about sport and its predominant importance and about fair play in particular. There was something healthy, but also a little primitive, and what the French would term *simpliste* in our outlook. All physical perfections and efforts meant a great deal to us, and we were keen on never being beaten at any game and in never giving in to being tired or discouraged or unable to do as well as others. Our ambitions were perhaps somewhat simple but it went to the making of entirely healthy and upright beings. Physical effort was natural to us, nor did the weather's inclemencies ever keep us at home. *On bravait tous les temps*. We were hardened little savages, and riding was our chief delight. Horses played an over-large part in our lives, and I could not conceive of anyone preferring to drive home in a carriage rather than stick to the saddle because a thunderstorm had overtaken you whilst riding. According to our code, you never forsook your horse, no matter how unkind and disagreeable the weather. Not so Nando. Why should he get wet on horseback instead of sitting snugly under a hood, hand in hand with his bride, if such a thing as a carriage were available? I was very fond of holding his hand, but a horse was a horse and rain ought not to beat you; that was not playing the game, that was not the real sporting attitude towards life to which we had been accustomed.

I describe this trivial incident because it was characteristic of the way we had been brought up, was characteristic also of how the same things were not equally important to us both. Certain fundamental laws, or shall we call them "canons," were drilled into us from our English nursery upwards and life never extirpated them, no matter where, how and with whom we lived. To-day, having passed my half century, my conceptions are still much the same, they are a fundamental part of my being, all my attitude towards life is based upon them. Of course I have learnt much since then, but the ground I stand on was made firm by those simple and to us undiscussable statutes: the things that were important. . . .

Of politics we knew nothing, nor had we any idea that social questions existed. We were royal little girls whom everybody loved, and who had certain undisputable rights in a world which was peaceful and exceedingly good to live in. Mamma had watched over us like an anxious shepherd, harm had never come our way, we had never looked

reality in the face; in fact we lived entirely in a glorious, happy, healthy Fool's Paradise.

We were not brought up to be prudes, but a certain part of life simply did not exist for us. A *risqué* book never reached our hands, we blushed when it was mentioned that someone was to have a baby, the classics were only allowed in small and well-weeded doses; as for the Bible, although we were well up in both Testaments, all the more revealing episodes had been carefully circumscribed. All this had combined to make of us healthy, happy, carefree, confident, credulous girls, entirely unsophisticated, entirely harmless, but also entirely unarmed against the onslaughts of life. However cruel this may have been in many ways, I consider all the same that that fundamental conception of honour, duty and fair play upon which our education was based, has, all through life, been a shield and stay to me, something which kept me straight through the storms, difficulties, temptations and arduous duties of a long existence. There was a clean beauty in our outlook that the enlightened girls of to-day can never know, some high ideal that no cruel reality could ever entirely uproot. I did not try to bring up my children this way; climate, environment, example, our times also, made it impossible; but certain glorious illusions that we had, have therefore for ever remained unknown to them. Their Garden of Eden was never quite as sunny and free of the serpent as ours. . . .

I remember another little moment of . . . I had best, perhaps, call it anxiety mixed with pained surprise.

We were at the Rosenau sitting round a table under the shade of the maple tree where Mamma liked to have tea. Charly had come for her annual visit, Charly the irresistible, superlatively well-groomed, charming, enticing, intelligent. My eyes devoured her; she made my crude youth feel awkward, almost boorish. No wonder Nando liked listening to her; I in such company had nothing to say. Nando belonged to the grown-ups, whilst I, for all my new dignity of a bride, was in reality only an uninteresting, ignorant schoolgirl that any cultivated, well-dressed woman could put in the shade.

Charly, with her ravishingly modulated voice, was holding forth in that wise way of hers, whilst two pale grey streams of sweet-smelling cigarette smoke came continually pouring from her small, beautifully

shaped nose. How well I can still see her, and looking back upon this scene of about thirty-six years ago I can almost feel again that cruel little ache that seemed to tighten my heart-strings. How charming she was, how fascinating, I too was under her spell, my eyes could not leave her face. Dr. X. was also present, each of them had something funny or interesting to say and they had all forgotten me—even Nando had forgotten me . . . I was only a stupid, ignorant, badly dressed little girl.

It did not end there, however. At a certain moment my person became suddenly the central object of their attention, they were in high spirits and needed, I suppose, a victim for their jokes. They began asking me questions I could not answer; I became shy, idiotic, more stupid than I really was, and it was somehow Charly and Nando who led the onslaught. They were being funny with German jokes, Potsdam, Berlin jokes: I was quite out of it, I felt and looked a fool, and Nando allowed Charly to make me feel a fool. . . .

The poor man was merely being gay, no doubt, gay in the way of Potsdam and Berlin, the sphere in which they were both most at home, but which was instinctively abhorrent to me. All of a sudden I felt lonely, cast out; something cold ran through my veins . . . something like a horrible little warning that I did not really belong to them, that something in me was fundamentally hostile to those jokes, to that way of being funny and amused, to that Potsdam way. Dr. X. and even Mamma joined in, they all banded together to make me feel small, to show up my ignorance, my English ignorance—at least that is how it seemed to me. . . .

Finally I got up and ran away, ran as far as I could, as though I could run back into the days when I was not a bride, but only Ducky's sister, Ducky's sister who would sit with her in the little green cupboard with the heart painted on its door, sit there hand in hand and wait. . . .

And Nando had not defended me, he had laughed with Charly, they had understood the same German jokes. . . . I only mention this scene because, curiously enough, looking back towards that time, it is the one scene which rises clearly out of the past, that past long since dead. Some racial antagonism had been awakened at that hour, and all through life I have hated those truly Prussian jokes. There was some-

thing in them that hurt me, and through many years of my later life they and Charly pursued me (Charly who was no more the adored Charly of my childhood), Charly and her German jokes.

But I must hurry on or I shall never come to the day of my marriage, that day which was to begin a new life for me.

Mamma gave me a wonderful trousseau, a real princess's trousseau in keeping with that time of prosperity and abundance. There were also innumerable wedding presents, some magnificent, some beautiful, some humble and touching; this was all very exciting and pleasurable. I was a real daughter of Eve and loved clothes, furs and precious gems, but I was astonished at the masses of dresses, cloaks, hats, handkerchieves, stockings, shoes and fine linen that I was supposed to need. All these manifold treasures were put out in a large room and I, with my sisters and many friends, used to walk about amongst them, awed by their magnitude. Getting married was certainly a stirring event.

But the greatest emotion I had before leaving my old home for the wedding at Sigmaringen was a talk with my father.

Papa very seldom became confidential, he was a very quiet man, talked little, and was occasionally even somewhat taciturn. In fact, we were never entirely in touch with him, but one of the last days he called me into his room. There, to my dismay, taking me into his arms, he burst into tears, confiding to me that he could not bear to see me, his eldest and dearly loved daughter, go to such a far and unknown country, that he had cherished another dream for me, one which would have very differently shaped my future. He hoped my husband was a good man, but he did not much like the look of the gentleman who had been chosen to be the head of our future household; he could not bear parting from me, I must not forget that I was a British-born princess and a sailor's daughter. He mentioned the dowry he and Mamma were giving me and a few other things I cannot remember. I was deeply moved, cruelly shaken by this quite unexpected outburst from one who, generally, was so undemonstrative and who seemed to look on from afar at our lives. Quite upset I finally fled to my own chamber and wept.

There was a pilgrimage we were to make before going to Sigmaringen for the wedding. I call it a pilgrimage because it is a picture

which has remained detached from all others, unique, arresting, a picture out of a strange world in an atmosphere quite different from any we had ever been accustomed to; a visit to Neu Wied to see Carmen Sylva, Queen of Roumania, at that time an invalid and therefore unable to be present at our wedding.

A few words are necessary to explain why Carmen Sylva was in her mother's house and not in Roumania.

There had been trouble at the Roumanian court, and Queen Elisabeth had played a prominent part in the little drama: I must touch upon it here as it is an explanation of much which was to follow later.

Ferdinand had been declared Heir Apparent to the throne of Roumania because his uncle had no son. King Carol and Queen Elisabeth had one little daughter, Maria, who died at the age of four, and since then no other child had been born to them. King Carol had accepted this fatality with the philosophy of one who, on all occasions, is completely master of his passions and emotions. But not so the poet-queen. The death of her child and the eternally frustrated hope of further maternity, had crushed her life and so continually preyed on her mind that, when the cruel hour came for adopting as Crown Prince one who was not born her son, it found her entirely unresigned.

It was old Ion Bratianu, father of the Ion Bratianu of my times, who had persuaded King Carol that the succession to the throne must be assured. Queen Elisabeth never forgot this and to the end of her days nursed a resentment against the man who had brought about this painful decision, a resentment which she carried over on to the second generation and which never allowed her wholeheartedly to appreciate Bratianu the second.

Torn away from the simple joys of Potsdam where, surrounded by comrades of his own standing, life had been entirely congenial to him, Ferdinand found himself suddenly condemned to an existence of semi-seclusion. Friendless, companionless, almost an exile in a foreign country, under the guidance of an uncle whose first and last interest was politics and who, for State reasons, was ready to sacrifice not only his own desires and happiness, but also those of any member of his family associated with him, the young prince was indeed a lonely man.

Having been severely brought up to serve and obey, he was both submissive and dutiful, but he was human and his aunt, although resenting



QUEEN CARMEN SYLVA PAINTING, AND SOME OF HER LADIES
A PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN BEFORE MY TIME



“DUCKY”—MY SISTER VICTORIA, JUST AFTER HER MARRIAGE

the place he occupied, was sorry for him. She understood his homesick loneliness in surroundings so different from those he had been accustomed to, yoked to an arduous task which at present did not really interest him, and of which he could not yet comprehend the beauty and glory. But Carmen Sylva was a poet and saw everything through the prisms of her romantic imagination. She was ardent, warm-hearted, of impetuous temperament, but certainly not discerning; seeing all things *en beau*, she had no perspicacity and therefore, all through a somewhat stormy and tragic life, fell an easy prey to those who abused her generous credulity for their own selfish ends.

Being childless, she was fond of surrounding herself with a flock of young girls who, fired by her inspired language, sat at her feet adoring every word she spoke. She liked to imagine herself one of those châtelaines of old who, at certain hours of the day, assembled around her all the women of her household to spin, sew and embroider. But she was also the soul of poetry, the Muse, the inspirer. To her the world was a great stage, and she was the central figure of all scenes enacted upon it, a tragic figure, but full of benevolence and comprehension of the sufferings of humanity.

Carmen Sylva was indeed a compelling personality. At an early age her hair had turned grey, almost white; her intensely blue eyes had a penetrating look. She laughed often, for her teeth were white and magnificent, but her laugh was in striking contrast with the tragedy of her eyes. Without ever having been considered a beauty there was a rare fascination about her and it was almost impossible not to fall under her spell, anyhow at first. To the young she was a sort of legend come down upon earth. Her voice was extraordinarily melodious and when she set out to charm she seldom failed. She did not inspire passion, but admiration, and that something tragic about her made all men feel they would like to lighten the burden she was carrying, even when they did not quite understand what the burden was. Character is Destiny. Carmen Sylva's character drove her towards self-sacrifice and tragedy. She saw all things as tragedies and therefore dramatized even the simplest events of everyday life.

No two human beings could have been greater contrasts than Carmen Sylva, the inspired poetess, and King Carol, her lord and master, that forbidding man with an iron sense of duty and no sense of

humour, for whom existed neither caprice nor relaxation in any form.

And into this unusual household came as third, Ferdinand, the diffident, unassuming little lieutenant from Potsdam, almost a boy in ways as well as mentality, though he too was imbued with all the German sense of duty and hierarchy; soft, kindly, inclined to be sentimental, of affectionate disposition, but distrusting his own capacities. A man easily overruled, and ready to admit the superiority of others, but with all, proud and easily hurt.

Hardly had he arrived before he was of course systematically taken in hand by his uncle so as to be trained for the heavy duties expected of him. Now it was all work and no play. The stern Sovereign, knowing no relaxation for himself, did not admit it either for others. He seemed to consider it quite natural that his young heir should have the same enthusiasm for sacrificing himself as he himself had, nor was he able to take into consideration the difference between their respective ages; he did not pause to consider that the part of follower is not as interesting or absorbing as that of leader. King Carol was at the helm, his nephew was merely an obedient looker-on, obliged to do his share without what I would call "getting any of the fun out of it." So Carmen Sylva became a refuge. Carmen Sylva and the many young ladies sitting at her feet. . . .

The obvious came to pass. Ferdinand fell in love with one of these. He fell in love with the favourite; the chosen one of the lonely queen's heart; the one in which she imagined her child's spirit lived again. . . .

Carmen Sylva knew that King Carol would admit of no marriage for his nephew with one not of his caste. Besides, the Roumanians wished their royal family to be exclusive, they were not to mix with those of the land. The Dynasty was to stand apart, aloof, out of the reach of commoners; they were to seek their wives or husbands beyond the frontiers, amongst those of their own rank. This had been specially stipulated when King Carol accepted the throne. But although Carmen Sylva knew this, her poetical temperament could not resist this romantic development. Besides, had not Ferdinand just selected *her* favourite? Hélène was a remarkable girl and her intelligence was far above that of the average royal princess. Hélène was dark-eyed, hot-blooded, impulsive, she would be a glorious mate for the pale, unassuming prince; she would lead and inspire him, fill him with life, spirit, ambition; they



CARMEN SYLVA, AS SHE WAS WHEN I FIRST SAW HER



OUR FIRST MARRIED PICTURE

would have healthy children—God would smile upon them. Thus in her heart of hearts argued the poet-queen.

A few weeks, or was it months, of courtship, of somewhat anxious happiness, for Ferdinand's conscience was not at peace . . . *der Onkel* was in the background, a grim figure which represented Fate. But Carmen Sylva lived in an atmosphere of palpitating romance. She idealized the lovers, she threw them together, encouraged, stimulated, helped, glorified them; caring little for the morrow, she lived entirely for the excitement of the moment, hoping that some lucky event would solve a situation which certainly bristled with danger; but in spite of her optimism the crash came!

Absorbed by State affairs, the King had noticed nothing of what was going on beneath his very eyes. Such an unimportant thing as love-making did not come within the sphere of his thoughts. The Queen and he had separate departments; hers was charity, poetry, literature, social duties, they met seldom during the day except at meals. So when all of a sudden one morning his nephew appeared before him to declare his intention of marrying Mlle. Hélène Vacarescu, a tempest was raised indeed, a cold tempest, an icy blast, freezing to its very roots Ferdinand's poor little attempt at romance.

I know none of the details; this sad story was kept as much as possible from my ears, and rightly, for in those days I should certainly have taken it tragically. So I only heard scraps of rumour here and there, piecing them together as best I could, afraid to ask for fear of being hurt. Much, much later, I understood and . . . smiled, and it was I, in fact, who, two years before my husband's death, brought the old friends of yore together again. A whole lifetime lay between. . . . But then the drama was very real. Public opinion made a huge outcry against the Queen who had dared tamper with the country's desires. According to the general opinion she was responsible for what had happened, and so great was the feeling against her that the King felt obliged to let her go to her mother at Neu Wied; besides, she took the unlucky story so much to heart that her health entirely broke down over it and for two years she was condemned to bed and bath-chair.

Ferdinand then had the choice of throne or Hélène Vacarescu put before him, but in such wise that he could but choose the throne.

Brought up to traditions of discipline and accustomed to bow before authority, he chose what was chosen for him, not without pain or inner revolt, but his sense of duty was deep-grained and stronger than anything else, and this sense of duty lasted him heroically through a life of many abnegations. He was sent travelling; he visited Holland, Belgium; he went to Sigmaringen, Potsdam, Berlin, Cassel. And at Cassel Fate was waiting for him. But *I* did not know that he was supposed to be travelling about with a broken heart.

But now I must conjure up that strange picture of Segenhaus near Neu Wied, home of the Dowager Princess of Wied, where, far from resigned to her fate, the sorely wounded queen was spending two years of quasi-banishment.

Ducky and I had only been told that she was a temporary invalid who could therefore not come to the wedding at Sigmaringen; this was the only explanation given us. It was Mamma who took us there.

The snow had come early that year, and it was in a sledge that we drove up to a queer little house in the woods, quite a fitting way to drive up to a house so different from any we had ever seen, and inhabited by people curiously unlike those we were accustomed to. In fact this little episode stands by itself, a strange experience in an unknown world, in an unaccustomed atmosphere.

With a jingling of gay bells our sledge drew up at the front door. On the threshold stood a very old lady in a black gown and with a white veil on her head. But she was very unlike other old ladies. Her forehead was hugely high, rounded and polished like a globe; a mighty forehead from under which a pair of deep-set eyes, with heavy, weary lids, looked out upon you as though from a long way off. So deep and so sunken were the eye sockets that they uncomfortably resembled those of a skull. A startling apparition, but all abeam with welcoming smiles. No less startling was the company standing behind her; women of all ages, but not one of them was quite normal. It was as though she had assembled under her roof all the proverbial deaf, lame, blind, dumb and poor of spirit. The old lady stood amongst them as a sort of kindly magician of whom all expected miracles. But it can easily be imagined that we, simple, everyday sort of people, felt somewhat disconcerted. The only man in this congregation of women was an old

gentleman with side-whiskers, bleared eyes and cynical mouth, rather a sinister-looking old fellow, or at least so he appeared to us, but he strangely completed the weird picture.

The lame, the dumb, the blind, were presented to us in turn. Most of them were poor relations; the old lady decidedly seemed to have a predilection for collecting the abnormal. Later we learned that she was supposed to have the faculty of a healer and that her house was always invaded by the sick and suffering. She was kind-hearted and proverbially benevolent. In later years Queen Elisabeth related to me many strange things about her mother. She was highly psychical and at certain periods of her life had trances, when her spirit seemed to separate from her body; she would fall into a sort of *extase* and during these trances her body became weightless and she could float above the ground. When in this state it has been said she could even walk over the backs of the chairs or float down the stairs. How much truth there is in this I cannot say. That the strange lady had abnormal faculties there is no doubt; but being outside the enchanted ring of those who are able to live between two worlds I feel unworthy of trying to give any explanation.

On the day when we were her guests, the old lady revealed none of her mysterious faculties, she was simply a woman full of sighs; a care-worn mother anxious for her sick daughter, an amiable hostess whose conversation was both interesting and picturesque.

With many kindly exclamations of hospitality we were ushered into a goodly sized hall lined with simple pinewood. The principal feature of this hall was some panels painted with extraordinarily large and unsubstantial flowers which were in violent contrast with their sober setting. Immediately the old princess explained that these panels had been painted by her daughter. We looked about us, somewhat overcome by the strangeness of our surroundings, a mute question on all our lips: where *was* her daughter?

Finally Mamma made amiable inquiries about the Queen's health. The weary-eyed mother threw up her hands.

"*Ach, Elisabeth, ach! . . .*" It seemed that Elisabeth was a great anxiety to her. Each day her mood changed. It was all very difficult; we were to know that for many months past Elisabeth was lamed, or anyhow imagined she was lamed. She would neither walk nor stand.

She painted all day in her bed, she was a restless worker. Sometimes she was wheeled about in a chair. She loved the woods, but for all that it was difficult ever to get her to leave the house. But she was ready to receive us; her mother had been anxious what attitude she would adopt, but to her relief Elisabeth had made no protest about our coming, but one could never tell; yes, it was all very difficult, she was not easy to manage. "*Ach!* my Elisabeth is very fantastic, she was always thus, even as a child. Always *himmelhoch jauchsend oder zum Tode betrübt*, the real poet temperament, inclined to be tragic always, but now, alas, there has been enough to be tragic about, *ach! ach!*"

Probably Mamma understood what the eccentric old lady was talking about; to Ducky and me, however, it might have been Chinese! Suddenly, turning to me she said: "But she will not be able to resist you, my dear, you are like the blossoms of spring." This was somewhat startling, but everything in this house was startling, the old princess, the grand flowers painted on the walls, and hovering in the background that strange horde of biblical invalids. Then there was also that mysterious queen who could not or would not stand or walk. Where was she?

"Shall we have the pleasure of seeing your daughter?" Mamma was on her best behaviour, we knew it by her voice; but her eyes were roving all over the place, she was taking everything in; there was no one like Mamma for enjoying strange experiences.

"*Ach, Gott*, yes! She is prepared, she will receive you, she is painting in her bed, she is always painting. Sometimes it is poetry, only poetry, or then it's music, but now it is painting, and such large paintings, so difficult in bed. But Elisabeth likes difficulties. I hope I shall be able to persuade her to come to lunch in her wheeling chair. One of her strange fancies is that she can only eat cold dishes, tiny little dishes, of many different kinds, but nothing must be hot. *Ach*, yes, Elisabeth . . ." and again up went the mother's hands in a gesture of perplexity.

Princess Marie of Wied spoke English fluently, but with a broad German intonation. Her voice seemed to come from afar as did the look of her eyes out of those deep sockets so like a death's head.

Finally, after having tidied up a bit, we were led to another part of the house where the invalid queen had her apartment. It was a hushed

procession as though we were marching to church. Up wee stairs, then down a few steps; this was a new annexe to the old house, we were told, built according to Elisabeth's desires: "Elisabeth likes small rooms and queer little corners," explained the mother. At last we reached a door. The old lady opened it just a little and in a voice which sounded both anxious and ingratiating asked if we could come in. The answer must have been in the affirmative because, without further parley, we were ushered into a queer little room, the principal part of which was occupied by a large, low bed which was lit from above by a skylight. Upon this bed, propped up by many very white and very soft pillows, lay the person we had come to see.

I would like to do complete justice to that first meeting with Carmen Sylva and to be able to describe exactly the impression she made upon me, for it was very deep and very stirring.

The *mise-en-scène* may have been intentional, certainly it was effective. The light pouring down from above upon that exiled, white-clad invalid propped up against those many snowy cushions, the sweet voice, the wide gestures of welcome and that smile over flashing white teeth, that smile which left the deep blue eyes to their tragedy. Later, I knew how much Aunt Elisabeth studied her first effects, she has often staged them before me and expected me to play my rather grudging part in them. To her poetical temperament acting came quite naturally. As mentioned before, to her the world was a vast stage, she saw all things as a series of scenes out of a drama in which she had the leading rôle; and to-day, this receiving of one who was usurping the place of the girl she had chosen, was drama indeed. Innocent though I was, I was the rival; the winning rival, and that wide gesture of welcome was on her part a gesture of heroic abnegation; she felt it as such and she meant to act it magnificently, which she did.

I was clasped in her arms, she called me "*lieb Kindchen*" and her eyes were full of pain; she passed her hands over my forehead, my hair, and there was something hungry in the way she gazed at me. Excruciatingly shy, but fascinated from the first moment, I submitted somewhat sheepishly to this unexpected outburst of emotion. I was keenly aware of Mamma and Ducky's presence in the room, for nothing is more embarrassing for the young than to have as silent audience those who are critics and intimates of their everyday life.

Mamma was averse to anything resembling a scene, *très femme du monde*, she was austere sober at those moments when others become effusive. On this occasion she tried to lighten an atmosphere she considered too romantic with polite and intelligent conversation; but Carmen Sylva had no intention of being decoyed from the part she meant to play. There was, so to say, a silent passage of arms and one could not help feeling how from the very first there was an almost instinctive antagonism between these women, both so strong, but of such opposite types, an antagonism which did not lessen on better acquaintance. Like flint against steel it seemed to draw sparks on the very first contact. Their attitude towards life, their *Lebensauffassung*, their tastes, habits, way of expressing themselves were fundamentally different. Nor did the poet-queen make things better when, after having looked at me with that tragically intense gaze of hers, she declared that I had a great resemblance to a classically well-known work of art called the "Liller Mädchenkopf," a celebrated tinted wax bust of a sad-looking maiden, of which she had a copy in her room. Somehow my mother resented her daughter being compared to anything so pathetic, but Aunt Elisabeth looked wise and stuck to her opinion. There was something electric in the atmosphere and it certainly emanated from that broad, low bed under the skylight.

Suspended above her, so that she could reach it comfortably from her reclining position, was a large, black, glazed board upon which the invalid was painting the same kind of unsubstantial, giant flowers as those in the hall downstairs. I was something of a flower painter myself, and these flowers the queen's paint-brush was indulging in upset my every conception of art and botany. Nothing within me agreed with those flowers nor with their hard, over-shiny black background. And here I must place on record my first conscious experience of having had to admire something out of politeness instead of conviction. It was a painful experience and one often repeated during my long association with Carmen Sylva. According to my appreciation, good taste was not one of Aunt Elisabeth's specialities, and to make matters worse it was a loud, assertive, eccentric, not-to-be-ignored taste; it met you at every turn, and as Aunt was an enthusiast and very much convinced of the merits of all she did, you were always being called upon to admire and approve. Many a time I have had to implore Heaven's for-

givenness for the lies I was obliged to tell so as not to hurt her feelings. These almost daily encounters with my aunt's queer tastes were for many years almost akin to physical pain.

On this first occasion, however, when she had taken my fancy by storm, it was a painful shock not to be able to admire wholeheartedly the work of her hand. She was so fascinating, so charming, the things she said were so sweet, so touching; her voice was music, everything was in keeping with the poetical atmosphere emanating from her, except her painting and her pince-nez which was too prosaic an ornament for so inspired a face.

Evidently this first meeting with the bride that the Queen had *not* chosen for her nephew went off better than her mother had dared to hope, for Elisabeth, to the old princess's intense relief, deigned to appear for lunch. All swathed in soft white cashmere, and looking down upon us from the elevated chair a servant had wheeled up to the table, she was indeed a fascinating picture. She was like some sort of high priestess expounding strange creeds too confusing for the ordinary mind, and this hushed, snow-clad house, hidden away in the woods, was a fitting shrine for one who had retired into solitude awhile to forget the injustice of a world too vulgar to understand her rarer essence. And everything seemed to have been specially combined so as to set off that one central figure, everything was in the picture; the anxious, sunken-eyed mother, that weird company of maimed relations expecting miracles and like a sinister guardian of this houseful of women, that old gentleman with the secretive, unprepossessing face.

I learned much later that Queen Elisabeth resented his presence. He was supposed to be secretly married to the old princess. Anyhow, he was an added source of tragedy to one who dramatized life.

During that memorable meal I could not take my eyes off the Queen's face. I had entirely fallen under her spell; she was a romantic personage and I loved romance.

Before we left I was asked to come alone to her room. She spoke to me about Roumania, about the duties that would await me there. She told me about Nando and about how she had tried to make him happy, but did not mention the drama which had for awhile separated their ways. Her voice was music, but her language often too high-

flown for my immature mind; I did not always understand what she was talking about, there was nothing positive I could grasp, it was just music, poetry; her words sang in my brain. A curtain was being lifted, giving me a glimpse into a world unknown to me, where all things had other names, other meanings, an unreal world which only existed whilst she was talking, and which dissolved like mist when I left her bedside. But she was wonderful, herself a poem, a white apparition, born to be adored.

I can still remember a sledge drive, the woods hushed beneath their thick coating of snow. The strange old princess drove with us, and the white fur cap she wore gave her the appearance of one who had strayed from the Middle Ages into our modern world. She talked a lot, and at moments her language had a slight echo of her daughter's poetical eloquence, but most of what she had to say was solid common sense and Mamma enjoyed her company. She was, it seems, on excellent terms with King Carol and in almost daily communication with him, for he looked upon her as a trustworthy and tactful guardian of the person who had so grievously perturbed the order of his court. There were many sighs, but the old lady gave us to understand that she was equal to her difficult duties.

The object of our drive was a visit to Prince Wilhelm of Wied, Queen Elisabeth's brother. He and his family inhabited a large white house on the top of a hill; a large, low building, standing out against a background of magnificent beech woods, and with a beautiful view over the Rhine Valley.

The Prince of Wied was an almost startling replica of his sister, but less dramatic. Unlike the poet-queen, he assumed a jovial attitude towards life, but one in which, curiously enough, one could also divine a certain degree of pose. He seemed to laugh more than he was amused. Like his sister, he had magnificent teeth, a high forehead under masses of grey-white hair, and the same pince-nez pinched his rather fleshy nose. Even the gestures of his finely shaped hands were the same; there was even the same affectation about the way he laid them before him whilst talking as though himself fascinated by their shapeliness. I cannot say that I liked him. His joviality seemed partly assumed. But there was nothing of pose about his very ugly but exceedingly refined

wife, born a Princess of Orange, who had brought a large fortune and magnificent jewels into the somewhat impoverished but very ancient and blue-blooded family of the Wieds. This lady met with my mother's unstinted approval; she was *très grande dame* without the slightest touch of eccentricity. They had two daughters and three sons, but I cannot remember how many of them we met during that first visit. The house was sympathetic, old-fashioned and full of family pictures.

Queen Elisabeth loved her brother. Only once, many years later, did I see them together, and I must confess that the combined type was rather overwhelming; something within me was instinctively hostile. I could not help feeling that they were playing up to each other and that their laugh, in spite of an enviable show of white teeth, did not ring quite true. All through life I have had a curious faculty of sensing the undercurrent of other people's emotions, even when they were playing a quite different part to the gallery. This is sometimes very isolating. But in these early days I am describing, though I felt when there was insincerity, I could not yet reason it out. Sister Ducky, the most truthful soul I have ever met, has also this faculty.

CHAPTER XII

THE WEDDING

I CANNOT remember exactly the date of this visit to Segenhaus but it must have been shortly before our final departure to Sigmaringen for the wedding; anyhow, it was late in the season because it was already so cold.

At last the day came for leaving the old home, and we started all together, a large party.

Mamma had her own ideas about travelling which were principally based upon an abnormal, but virulent horror of saloon-carriages. She declared that they shook more than any other sort of carriage and therefore she could not bear them. So every offer of more luxurious transport was always firmly refused and we were all bundled into first-class carriages. These, in those early days, were wanting in the most elementary comforts, not to say necessities. Both Coburg and Sigmaringen were on small side-lines, the rolling-stock was old and rickety and none of the coupé was connected with corridors. So once in your compartment you were cut off from your fellow-travellers; it was therefore most important not to let yourself be boxed up with the wrong companions.

Though the distance was not really great, the connexions were bad and made the journey painfully lengthy, spreading over nearly a whole night and day.

I have a most disagreeable remembrance of that acutely uncomfortable journey in bitterly cold weather, for the winter was an exceptionally severe one. Ducky and I shared a compartment which had only one seat which was not even a bed, so that we slept in turns on the hard, cold and none too clean floor. We did not take this tragically, we were hardened, out-of-door girls, but we *did* resent the washing next morning, the icy water, the want of space, and that gritty feeling of the carpetless floor, especially as we were to arrive in gala, and wanted to look our best. But two things were good; we were still together and the

frost during the night had painted marvellous designs on the window-panes, lovely large thistle branches of exquisite shape. This was a feast for the eye, but did not make us feel any the warmer.

Luckily, just before reaching Sigmaringen, there had to be a change of trains, and this time Mamma could not refuse the royal carriage sent to meet us. This made it possible to give a few finishing touches to our get-up in front of a *real* looking-glass, and we were also given some warm water in which to wash off the last smuts of that comfortless journey.

I have no clear remembrance of our arrival nor of the following days. I was the centre of all attention, and yet I had the strange sensation that in a way I was outside all the events which were taking place. *Je les subissais*, as the French would express it; they went on in spite of my feelings and emotions.

The King of Roumania had arrived with many followers, members of his household, members of his Government, generals, officials; a confused mass of faces passed before my bewildered gaze; I felt small, awkward and lost.

All my future subjects spoke beautifully fluent French. A few knew a little German, but not one of them could talk English. I began regretting that we had been so refractory about learning French: I now found myself at a cruel disadvantage, and the answers I gave all these amiable old gentlemen (for they were nearly all old) were sadly halting; besides, all the amiable things they said to me embarrassed me greatly. I was quite unaccustomed to the fluency of Latin compliments.

There was a Conservative Government in at that time, under old Lascar Catargi, a quiet old gentleman, full of steady common sense, slow of speech, with measured movements. He looked rather like Clemenceau, if you can imagine a tame Clemenceau with no "tiger" about him. There were also Alexandre and Jacques Lahovari, George (Nabab) Cantacuzène, Peter Carp, Generals Florescu and Manu. There may also have been others, but I do not remember them. In those days they were all like masks to me, and not very pretty masks at that, though one and all were amiable, smiling and full of welcoming words. They seemed to take a fancy to the fair little maiden who was to be imported into their country, though somewhat abashed, I think, to discover that she was quite such a child.

The only really good-looking one amongst them was General Florescu, who had a fine head and wore a pointed beard and huge moustaches in the Second Empire style. Peter Carp had a curiously shaped head, an eagle nose, and an eye-glass which accentuated his humorous, not to say satirical expression. He attracted me, he was less pompous than most of them, and I somehow divined human feelings and understanding behind his irony.

But the one who, because of that strange law of attraction (or is it affinity?), immediately became my friend, was General Vladescu, head of the King's Military Household. Vladescu was the real old soldier; martial appearance, good figure, a conquering white moustache, the ends standing far away from his face; besides, he was gloriously good-humoured and cheerful. He immediately seemed to comprehend that in fact I was but a child who was being torn out of a happy family circle. He guessed my feelings and mentality: so instead of losing time with idle compliments, he set about making my sisters and me laugh heartily whenever he spoke to us. In no man's eye have I ever seen a merrier twinkle. Many a sad hour of my later life did Vladescu cheer, he divined my loneliness in a far, strange land and would often clear the heaviest atmosphere with his cheerful jokes. This friendship, which sprang into being at the first contact, lasted till the day of his death many years later.

Ion Kalinderu was, of course, amongst the most prominent of the King's followers. His attitude at Sigmaringen was much the same as it had been at Windsor. There was a look of sly and yet solemn understanding about him; he always seemed all blown out with secret knowledge, to be the ambulating depository of kingly confidences. His every gesture was a proclamation of the exceptional favour in which he was held. He liked to simulate extreme modesty, but it was modesty "*à la* Kalinderu" which had little of the proverbial violet about it. No green leaves hid Ion Kalinderu; in spite of his modesty, he was very conspicuous indeed.

Besides this goodly company of gentlemen, King Carol had brought with him two Roumanian ladies; Madame Marie Cantacuzène and Madame Marie Grecianu. The latter was a sweet-faced, elderly widow, chosen to be my lady-in-waiting, of whom I shall have much to relate later on. Madame Cantacuzène was also a widow, but much older and

was considered one of the principal pillars of Bucarest society; she was an extremely pleasant and cultivated lady, mother of many married daughters and an only son, already a distinguished scientist and one of Pasteur's favourite pupils. Besides, she was mother-in-law of two eminent politicians, Dumitru Sturdza and Peter Carp, who has already been mentioned. Sturdza was as passionate a Liberal as Carp was a Conservative, and it was only the smiling intelligence of this charming old lady that made family reunions possible, for in Roumania, as I was to learn to my discomfiture, political passions ran high.

In later years, Marie Cantacuzène became one of my staunchest allies, but at that first meeting I was shy and tongue-tied, responding but lamely to her amiable advances. I felt more drawn to Madame Grecianu, whose face was gentler and very attractive. Both ladies had motherly feelings towards me, understanding better than I did then, what a lost and lonely little creature I should be in a foreign land.

Royal guests from several countries had also arrived, and there were continual gala processions to the station to receive each in turn. Grandmamma Queen, not being able to come herself, had sent the Duke of Connaught, or "Uncle Arthur" as we called him. The Tsar had deputed the Grand Duke Alexis, Mamma's good-looking, fair-bearded sailor brother, the bachelor brother, gayest of the gay. The Countess of Flanders, with her son Albert, the late King of the Belgians, represented that country. She was the only living sister of King Carol and Fürst Leopold and sister-in-law to King Leopold II of Belgium, and Albert was therefore Nando's first cousin. He was extremely amusing and witty and we immediately became firm friends. The Countess of Flanders had a characteristically Hohenzollern profile. As to face she much resembled our dear *Onkelchen*; she had the same kindly drawl in her voice: as to character, however, she was much more energetic and *intransigente*. There was something manly and decided about her. Though handsome, she entirely lacked feminine charm and her clothes smacked of the masculine. Jewels and evening dress seemed out of place on her. Squarely built and forcible, she inspired you with a feeling of confidence, but one sensed that there was nothing pliable nor yielding about Aunt Marie Flanders. There was

great affinity of character between her and King Carol, and she was his great ally. He consulted her and listened to her opinion. Her children stood in awe of her, and her tremendous admiration for the kingly brother represented a *summum* of boredom in their lives under which they writhed. Albert was not long in imparting this fact to us; indeed his jokes about "the great man of the family" were more witty than polite; Albert was full of slow fun and did much to cheer the somewhat solemn wedding atmosphere.

The Kaiser had desired to grace in person this important family festivity and the most official procession to the station was to meet the Lord of the Land who came, according to custom, accompanied by an embarrassingly numerous suite composed of embarrassingly huge gentlemen in blazing uniforms. All things pertaining to the Kaiser were large, loud and showy. He liked to assume the attitudes of a tyrant or despot; he never forgot or let you forget that he was first. His followers were enormous and many of them extremely handsome. William changed his uniform several times a day as a smart woman changes her gown. A never-ending scale of colours led finally up to the full dress of the magnificent Cuirassiers of the Guard; snow-white, with huge gauntlet gloves, high shining boots and Lohengrin-like, eagle-crowned helmet. This was the *ne plus ultra*, and I have seen men look indeed like conquering heroes in this garb, even if the Kaiser himself never entirely reached this ideal. One of those who did was Max Fürstenberg, a close friend of William's who, when young and attired in this uniform, was a goodly sight.

My father, like his brother (later Edward VII), had no great affection for his nephew. None of our uncles could stand his overbearing manner; he was for ever offending them or putting their backs up. Even his joviality had a touch of insolence about it. It was only those who belonged to his inner circle, or catered for his good graces, who really bore with his ways. When in a good humour the Kaiser could be charming, but beneath his boisterous spirits lurked something of the bully always ready to break through. Thus he was continually embarrassing his own relations, and even, what was much more unfortunate, offending royalties from foreign countries. My mother was one of the few who really got on with him. He interested her and her own masterfulness kept him at bay. Her all-seeing eye noted the ex-

pression on every face and she was ever ready to step in when there was storm in the air. In this she was magnificently seconded by Fürst Leopold. Peace-loving, amiable, loyal and unselfish, no one could be anything but polite in his presence. He had time for everyone and everything; the attentions he paid the Kaiser did not prevent his being *aux petits soins* for every other guest beneath his roof, even for the most humble and most uninteresting.

For this solemn occasion we had been given official apartments in the castle, whilst Nando lived in his parents' house, it not being considered correct for bride and bridegroom to live under one roof before the wedding. Receptions at the station, festive meals, the receiving of deputations and innumerable people coming to congratulate kept us busy and helped us over those last emotional hours before the wedding.

Thinking back, all is confusion in my mind, but I see the different rooms, the different faces and certain groups which used to form themselves. For some reason King Carol and my brother Alfred took a great fancy to each other. Alfred was of an inquiring mind and not at all shy with older people, and he was, besides, naturally amiable and communicative. Uncle Carol loved talking about his country and his work; perhaps his family had already listened too often to his tales; to Alfred they were new and full of interest, so he and the King would sit together on a certain little sofa which stood German-wise behind a table. I still have a clear vision of them, heads close together talking and talking; the older man delighted at the young fellow's keen interest in those things which were all important to the royal pioneer; my brother's face upturned, eager, full of life.

In another corner Albert was making my sisters and me laugh at his witty sayings, which both shocked and amused Nando, who would never have dared to be so funny at the expense of his betters.

I see dear old Grandmamma Josephine, the centre of a group that was trying to make her hear what they were saying, her sweet face all smiles, her hands with the too long-fingered gloves thrown up occasionally as a sign that she had understood. I see my mother-in-law, stiff, pale and suffering, having made the great effort of putting on an evening gown and many jewels; I see Papa, rather glum, Uncle Arthur

with his fine figure and aquiline profile, very amiable, very elegant and rather absent-minded. I see Uncle Alexis, conventionally polite, supercilious and slightly ironical, as though he were above all this fuss and noise, but amused withal, and trying to tune his thundering Russian voice to the diapason of his surroundings. I see the Kaiser perorating in his brightest uniform. I see Mamma, capable, amiable, watchful nothing escaping her eye, and flitting here and there, the *trait-d'union* between all these different groups, Fürst Leopold, the peacemaker, the charmer, the man who never thought of himself. . . .

I took a quite childish pleasure in my new dresses and beautiful jewels; Mamma had been extraordinarily prodigal, giving many of her own magnificent Russian gems.¹ It was difficult to realize that they were all mine. It was rather the same feeling that we had had in those far-off days when playing with old Hutchins, when I liked to imagine I was the Queen of Spain. Several times a day I could put on a new dress, but often when particularly smart I felt excruciatingly shy and ridiculously self-conscious, like a child dressed up. I was considered pretty, but looking through old photographs of the time I cannot quite understand why I had this reputation; besides, at that time we were wearing those fashions of "gigot" sleeves and stiff bell skirts which to-day appear so absurd to eyes accustomed to easier apparel. Occasionally I felt nothing but a negligible accessory to my voluminous sleeves, in which I almost entirely disappeared. I may have been smart but I was certainly not *chic*. I do not think Mamma considered it quite proper or *bon ton* for a princess to be *chic*.

And then the morning came when I awoke to the sound of bells, festive bells, bells for my own wedding. . . .

We had to submit to a threefold marriage, civil, Catholic and Protestant. The ceremonies took place in the morning and ended with a huge wedding breakfast. I remember it all as though it were a dream, a very far-off dream in which I played a dream part.

My wedding dress was of lustreless, heavy white silk, with puffed sleeves, of course, and bell skirt spreading out into a train. I had a dislike of lace veils, so in spite of all the old family lace, I wore tulle, kept in place by a diamond tiara, inside which a small wreath of orange

¹ These have all now been annexed by the Bolsheviks.



THE FIRST PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN OF ME IN ROUMANIA, 1893



MY HUSBAND WITH OUR FIRST CHILD, CAROL

blossom lay curled as in a nest. I was a thin, flat little maiden with very fair hair frizzled Queen Alexandra-wise on the forehead; my features were immature, my eyes blue, there was not much dignity about me. I looked as absurdly young as I was, and I felt as if I were playing at being grown up. I cannot say that I was very much enchanted with my own appearance, I had more romantic ideas about how a bride ought to look, but Mamma absolutely disagreed with these, so I was decked out according to her taste and wore my rather overpowering finery as best I could.

The Catholic marriage was the chief ceremony and took place in the church adjoining the castle, which was reached through long and intricate passages. Sigmaringen was a real old fortress, with all a fortress's peculiarities. The service was long and solemn with good singing and many priests. Our two *prie-Dieux* were well to the fore and most of the service was listened to kneeling. I liked the somewhat monotonous Latin chants; they enveloped me in a sort of protective trance which calmed fear and allowed hope to filter into my anxiously throbbing heart.

The English Church ceremony took place in one of the big drawing-rooms. We were married by a Naval Chaplain, and to me it was very sweet that it should be someone belonging to the Navy who joined our hands.

I have no remembrance of the wedding breakfast and hardly any of our send-off.

This was not to be a final good-bye, nor was it a driving off from home, so certain cruel emotions were spared me.

It had been decided that we should spend a few "honey days" at a little *Jagdschloss* not far from Sigmaringen, a royal summer residence surrounded by woods. My family remained at Sigmaringen, where certain festivities were to continue; amongst others on the third day there was to be a big ball at which we were to appear.

Krauchenwies was a dear little old house, more picturesque than comfortable, but quite a romantic setting for a honeymoon. But it was winter, we were shy and still strangers to each other and there was absolutely nothing to do. Nando was not a man of high spirits, nor was he imaginative, so he was quite at a loss how to entertain so child-

ishly young a wife. He was terribly, almost cruelly in love. In my immature way I tried to respond to his passion, but I hungered and thirsted for something more; besides, I cruelly missed Mamma and Ducky and felt lost and forsaken. I must confess that those winter days, buried away in that far-off little castle, were terribly long. There was an empty feeling about it all; I still seemed to be waiting for something that did not come. . . .

Once, with a gay jingling of sleigh bells, Mamma and sisters invaded our solitude. That sound of bells was too cheerful, it made my heart ache, it belonged too much to the old home. I confess that I wept. Mamma scolded me lovingly and said I should get accustomed to being a wife; she encouraged me with brave words, but I noticed a suspicious brightness in her eyes, very much like unshed tears. Mamma hated all weakness, she was a Spartan and expected the same attitude from her children, so not for the world would she have encouraged me to enlarge upon my feelings of distress.

I have no remembrance of the big ball given in our honour, no remembrance of anything more, in fact, but of a few last days we spent at Coburg before the final cruel departure, the breaking away from all that had been.

Mamma tried to make those last days as cheerful and happy as possible; she encouraged skating parties on the Rosenau lake, which were followed by amusing charades in the big hall of the Rosenau Schloss. All my friends clustered round me, made much of us, spoilt us in a thousand small ways, there was laughter, music, dancing, but a farewell feeling was in the air and tears beneath every smile.

One little scene I vividly remember. It was the last evening. On the following day we were to leave; I was not feeling well, was suffering from the effects of too many emotions, probably, and that sick feeling of departure; anyhow, Mamma, who generally never admitted that anybody could be ill, had encouraged me to go to bed early. I was living in the guest's room, no longer having my place in the "night nursery"; my little camp-bed had been removed from the row of three. It had been packed up as I insisted on carrying it away with me, that funny little camp-bed from Russia, which could be rolled up and easily taken from place to place.

The guest's apartment consisted of three rooms, a salon, a wee dress-

ing- and bedroom combined, in which I slept, and a larger bedroom beyond which was my husband's. Mamma, anxious about me, had come to kiss me good night as she had done when we were children. We both tried to be brave; I knew that Mamma disapproved of outbursts of sentiment, or "scenes" as she termed them, so I swallowed down every cry of fear and grief that welled up within me at the thought of to-morrow's farewell. I did give her an extra hug, though, but no word was spoken; that would have been beyond my strength.

I was supposed, like a good little girl, to fall off to sleep immediately, but with such perturbed feelings this of course did not happen and I heard Mamma whispering with Nando in the next room. She was probably making a few last suggestions, giving him a little advice how to treat his over-innocent, over-childish wife who was being torn out of all she was accustomed to and sent so far, far away. The conversation was not meant for me, nor did I try to listen, but finally, moving towards my door which was ajar, I heard Mamma say: "I must just have a last look at her . . ." and there, peeping round the edge of the door, was her dear face and tears were actually running down her cheeks! Seeing I was awake, she managed a brave smile, and we nodded to each other; I longed to throw my arms round her, to nestle my face against her damp cheeks and have a good cry, but Spartan training made all such effusion impossible. Perhaps it would have done her as much good as it would have done me, but I did not dare, so we simply smiled at each other and of course I was not supposed to have seen the tears.

But for months and months afterwards, devoured by loneliness and home-sickness in that far land, the vision of Mamma's brave face all wet with tears, peeping round the corner of the door, came back again and again, filling me with intolerable pain and *Sehnsucht* so that often I had to smother my mouth in my pillow not to call out with grief and longing—Mamma . . . Mamma . . . Mamma . . .!

But Mamma was no longer there, her dear round face all shiny with tears could no more bravely smile at me, she had been relinquished with all that belonged to the old home.

Mamma . . . Mamma. . . .

No agonized heartbeats can make time stand still. The hour of

parting came; it had to be faced. I was not however going quite alone, without anyone belonging to the days of my childhood. Mamma had decided that I should be accompanied by Lady Monson, one of her ladies-in-waiting who has not yet been mentioned in these pages, and by a certain Colonel Howard, an officer in the Black Watch whom we had known at Devonport, a charming, intelligent man in whom Papa had great confidence, although we children had never had much to do with him.

Lady Monson was no longer young. Mother of three grown-up daughters and one grown-up son, she was an exceedingly cultivated woman who lived a great deal abroad. Her special love was Italy, she spoke fluent Italian as well as several other languages, her English was always spiced with foreign words. There was a strange hoarseness about her voice which was not without charm; being extremely animated she gesticulated a great deal with her hands which made the trinkets on her many bracelets jingle in a special way. A great connoisseur of antiquities, she hunted up bric-à-brac shops wherever she went and would always return laden with innumerable quaint odds and ends. Not only her bracelets, but everything about Lady Monson jingled, her *châtelaine*, belt, beads, chains, etc., which were nearly all of them curios purchased in some foreign land. Lady Monson's husband was equerry-in-waiting to my father and was as calm as his wife was effusive; greater contrasts could not be conceived, but for all that they were excellent friends. Lady Monson was tall and had very handsome, somewhat pronounced features. Her three daughters were lovely, but with Lady Monson herself we children had never been intimate, she was too intellectual for our unripe minds. Our great friend amongst Mamma's ladies was Etta Keppel, *née* Blundel, the young lady I had so intensely admired when I was a child in Malta. She had married Colin Keppel, then flag-lieutenant to my father, later his equerry. Etta was a darling, she had great round eyes and reddish fair hair; we loved her and appreciated her companionship, she was gay and charming and Mrs. Blundel, her mother, was a beautiful woman. Our friendship had started at Malta, and was specially cemented at Devonport, where she was our chaperon, and an exceedingly pleasant chaperon indeed.

But for this official and none too easy mission I think Lady Monson

was an excellent choice. She was well versed in foreign ways and her fluency in French was a great help.

The moment when our train finally steamed out of the Coburg station was one of almost unbearable grief. It was as though my very heartstrings were being torn asunder. A feeling of intense despair came over me and it was only the ingrained habit of repressing our emotions which gave me courage not to cry out in my pain. There they all stood on the station platform—Papa, Mamma, Alfred, Ducky, Sandra, Baby Bee, surrounded by friends and old servants in their state liveries, hats in hand. But they were growing smaller and smaller, I could still just see their hands waving, but could hardly recognize their faces any more. I leaned far out of the window, it was freezingly cold, the ground was covered with snow. . . . Now I could not even see their hands waving . . . everything was a blur. As a last vision, the Feste Coburg, standing all cold against a cold sky; everything was cold, it was winter—Mamma, Ducky, my inseparable companion, my faithful chum—winter, snow, cold, everything was cold, even the old fortress stood shivering against the wintry sky.

Was that a sound of bells, sleigh-bells? Were they the bells of those driving back to the old home from which I had flown? Jingle, jingle, how I loved the sound of sleigh-bells . . . or was it only the sound of the train wheels crunching on the frozen snow?

A hand on my shoulder; I turned round—Nando.

Nando had a kind heart, there were tears in his eyes also. In a way Nando understood, had he not also left his home for a far land not yet his own? . . .

PART THREE

EARLY WEDDED DAYS

CHAPTER XIII

WELCOME TO BUCAREST

THAT was a long journey. Away from home, away from all that had been, away, away, through a wintry world to an unknown land, to a life unknown.

Frost and snow, and at heart an intolerable ache that would not become less.

My husband, happy to have me at last all to himself, kept me jealously away from any of our followers. I was his now and no one was to break in upon our solitude.

The King of Roumania had sent us his private carriage, it was heated well and we were very comfortable, but it was a long journey and the days too seemed long.

I should have liked to see Lady Monson, to call her in occasionally and talk to her, of home, of those left behind, but Nando would not have it. I also had a vague impulse to talk to the woman who had been attached to me as lady-in-waiting, Madame Grecianu. She had a motherly face, her voice was gentle, she would perhaps have been able to reassure me a little, give me advice, something about what would be expected of me "down there," for it was thus that I designated the country I was going to; "down there," and the term was as hazy as the conceptions I had about it.

Nando was too much in love to explain things to me: his attitude of the moment was to let well alone, trouble would come soon enough. He was never very good at explaining; he was always somewhat vague in his expressions. Later I often wondered if he saw things in pictures as I did. It is impossible to get inside another's brain—and there are some who have not the faculty of putting things clearly before you, they cannot find the words which make things concrete.

I had the feeling that I needed an anchor somewhere, something stable and absolute upon which I could lean, even if it was only a precise picture, something my mind could lay hold of.

Perhaps Madame Grecianu could have given me this, but Nando, since the Vacarescu tragedy, had lost his faith in people: he had become painfully suspicious and was on the defensive even against those who were attached to us. This attitude on the part of my young husband did much to make our early years difficult and painful; he trusted no one and felt that isolation was my only safety.

Besides Colonel Coanda, the A.D.C., the King had named a certain General Robescu as head of our household. King Carol's household was almost entirely military and this is a tradition we have kept up. When I became Queen many years later, instead of having a gentleman-in-waiting, I had an A.D.C.

General Robescu, unlike most Roumanians, was a fair man with blue eyes. He hid a kind heart under a supercilious air. This was the gentleman who had not been able to win my father's confidence. Although he showed no special talent as organizer of our household, he nevertheless served us faithfully for many years and was still with us when my husband came to the throne. But there was something ironical and off-hand about him which made him a somewhat disconcerting personage to a young woman of my age and education. He seemed to take nothing seriously and was inclined to scoff at my perplexities, never giving me the feeling that I could really lean upon his advice, simply because he would not admit my difficulties. He might have been fatherly, but just missed being so. He had a truly Latin turn of mind to which in those days I was in no wise accustomed and was uncomfortably inclined to be ironical about one's dearest beliefs. He made one's most cherished principles appear comic or worthless. Often he was really witty, but it was a form of wit to which my Anglo-Saxon nature was instinctively hostile. "There are many men who feel a kind of twisted pride in cynicism," said Roosevelt, and such a man was General Robescu.

Our journey was to be interrupted by an official visit at Vienna where we were to pay our respects to the old Emperor.

King Carol held Franz Joseph in high esteem and was also personally much attached to him. At that time Austria was still a centre of great power and political machinations. King Carol kept in close touch with the Ballplatz and his own policy was strongly influenced by Vienna's different humours. We were to feel this all through our youth. Uncle

above all was a politician; politics were his ruling passion, I can even say the only real passion of his life, and politicians in those days took themselves immensely seriously. To him the great game of politics was a game of such huge, overpowering importance, that all things were sacrificed to it, as we soon learnt to our cost. Being a zealot in what concerned his convictions he was therefore also a past master in the art of making himself obeyed even by the most recalcitrant and stiff-necked.

Now that the glories of that proud, imperial, "most Catholic" court, with all its pomp and magnificence, its archaic etiquette and restrictions, have passed away, as through all ages all earthly vanities pass away, I regret that I remember so little of that visit.

I was at that uncomfortable age of shyness and self-consciousness when all interest centres round one's own person, when one's eye sees nothing but the very evident and one's ear hears next to nothing, simply because one does not understand.

I have a very hazy remembrance of the old Emperor, slim, smart, a perfect figure though a little bent from the shoulders, carrying his head rather low, very polite, but not animated nor talkative; and a less hazy one of the beautiful Archduchess Maria Theresa, wife of the Emperor's eldest brother, who helped to do the honours of the state banquet, the Empress being, as in later years was mostly the case, absent from the capital. There must have been many other members of the Imperial family, but I remember none of them except tall, stately, gazelle-eyed Maria Theresa and Archduke Otto, brother of Franz Ferdinand who was assassinated at Serajevo. Otto was father of the young Emperor Karl whom revolution dethroned after the World War, Franz Ferdinand's children not being considered *erbfähig*. Being at all times a lover of beauty, I remember these two merely because of their good looks. In a family of tall but heavy-featured men Otto stood out, a handsome exception. I remember, however, murmurs about the loose life he led and of how unhappy he made his wife, Marie Josepha, sister of the last King of Saxony. In those days I was very vague about what was meant by a "loose life," but I looked with special interest at Otto because of all the whisperings which inevitably accompanied his name.

The table was one mass of beautiful flowers and superb gold plate; we ate off exquisite, rare old china; there was excellent music and a

great deal of light. I cannot remember what the dining-hall was like, but I *do* very painfully remember a huge black grease-spot on my delicate pink dress; I was indeed more conscious of this black spot on my dress than of anything else that evening, including the Emperor himself. It was while getting out of the Imperial carriage that my dress was spotted, and both Lady Monson and Madame Grecianu spent their evening in bemoaning this fact so that the odium of that unfortunate stain should not fall upon my carefully chosen trousseau.

Curiously enough, although King Carol was so partial to Vienna, this was the one and only visit we were ever allowed to pay to that court. As will be seen later, *der Onkel* was exceedingly averse to our travelling about; curiously enough, he set no value on the personal touch. His successor was to marry well; Roumania's ambition was that their future queen should be closely connected with all the ruling royal houses of Europe; our marriage had therefore been considered exceedingly advantageous, but as far as I was concerned no profit was made of these advantages, because through the long years whilst we submitted to King Carol's rule, I was very rarely allowed to go anywhere or to keep personally in touch with my crowned relatives. It was, in fact, each time a painful tussle to obtain the smallest permission to go anywhere except to visit our own parents. Whenever we tried to break through this rule there was what I can only rightly describe as a "hell of a row," though I would not have dared use such an expression in the great man's presence. Besides, he did not understand English. . . .

But I must hurry on, though I am at times inclined to pause, as though taking breath, knowing the ordeals that lie before me; in thought I live them all over again one by one. . . .

The crucial hour was approaching. We had reached Predeal, then the frontier between Roumania and Hungary. Flags, guards of honour, music, crowds, cheers. Officials in *fraques* and top-hats made speeches, whilst the military band continued to play the National Anthem, drowning their voices. Hundreds of peasants had come from neighbouring villages with their schools; the din was tremendous, the many faces made me giddy. Nando and I stood at the window looking down upon these eager, noisy manifestations which were repeated at each station along the way. It was bitterly cold and the peasants, men

and women, were muffled in greatcoats embroidered in many colours, the women had veils or coloured handkerchieves on their heads: they fascinated me; I had eyes only for these quaintly clad people, so different from anything I had ever seen. All the world over a bride is a person of great interest, so thousands of eager faces stared up at me, thousands of shining eyes consumed me; I was horribly shy and very awkward about accepting these over-loud, hearty but confusing manifestations of joyous welcome. I was absurdly self-conscious, had no ease of manner nor *savoir-faire*. Nando helped me as best he could,—he was more at home, but he was not fond of official receptions.

Looking back upon myself as I was then, is as looking back upon a rather shadowy, very timid and exceedingly silly younger sister in whom I find none of myself to-day. Slim, with fair, unnecessarily frizzled hair, the blue eyes of a confiding child, awkward, unassertive, seeking a stable point in others as I found none in myself; credulous, impulsive, unprepared for troubles and difficulties, I must have looked exactly what I was, an innocent little fool with a head stuffed full of illusions and dreams.

From across the years I feel like stretching out a helping hand to that fair wraith of myself. From my knowledge of to-day, reaped through many years of struggles, I should like to call out a word of warning; I am almost horrified when I remember how confident, how unprepared I was. Having kindly feelings towards all men, my belief in others was unlimited, no mistrust lived in my soul, "there was no guile in me." And there I was setting out on a thorny road full of pitfalls, and no one there to say "look out," no one to explain that life was a bitter reality, not a dream, that "good intentions pave the way to hell," that confidence in others and a glorious optimism that all is well in the best of worlds is a fine thing but not always safe. But each man must work out his own salvation; it is only by living that we learn to live. Another's experience seldom helps us; step by step we must fight our own battles, solve our own difficulties, scramble out of the holes and traps into which we fall. My mother's experience could not be mine, nor mine my children's. We are one and all solitary wanderers in spite of the love we meet along the way. . . .

"We shall be arriving in half an hour, you had better dress." Nan-

do's hand was on my shoulder, it trembled slightly; he felt the ordeal I was to go through. He bent down and kissed me, but he made no recommendations: recommendations would have been no good; I could not even have heard them because of the over-loud beating of my heart. . . .

So I dressed—I put on the fine clothes Mamma had so lovingly chosen for her daughter's entry into her new capital. A willow-green velvet dress, over which I was to wear a long mantle of violet velvet shot with gold and lined with white fox which had such a large white collar that my head all but disappeared in it, and to crown all a wee golden toque studded with amethysts, but so ridiculously small that it lay almost buried in my fair frizzled fringe which my maids had specially curled for the occasion.

Two maids had been attached to me, an English one and a German. The German was new to me and had been carefully selected as an elderly trustworthy person who could be helpful to such a very young wife. Although short and plump she was called Louise Lang (Long). This worthy person was almost painfully tidy and much inclined to slow pomposity. Her hair was severely drawn back from her forehead, she enunciated her words with precise correctness and nothing could shake her out of her consummate perfection. Being an ardent Roman Catholic, church played a preponderant part in her irreproachable life, so great a part indeed that, when two years later we took up our residence in a palace just beyond the limits of the town, she shortly afterwards left me as she could not, because of the distance, go to daily Mass. Louise Lang curiously resembled a robin, as she was very round in front and had bright eyes that looked out over a nose comparable only to a neat and rounded beak. Being self-righteous this prominent nose was carried "high," although there was nothing vainglorious about little Louise Lang.

Louise Andrews—for they lacked originality and had the same Christian name—was quite another type. Thin, pale, her eyes were deep set, her mouth firm, her appearance austere. If not quite as painfully tidy as her German colleague she was just as irreproachable, and what was a rare occurrence, it was the Englishwoman who spoke German instead of the other way round, which is more usually the case. The two Louises did not live long enough together to become bitter enemies. If

I describe them so minutely it is because maids are destined to play a rather large part in a lonely royal lady's life.

Now that I was ready, I felt as though dressed up for the sacrifice. Mamma had said: "Clothes play a great part all over the world and more especially in Southern countries, so never forget to dress carefully for festive occasions, it belongs to a princess's duties."

I stood there in the glory of my new attire thinking over her words. She had also said this: "You are going to an Orthodox country, respect its Church and its ceremonies, kiss the Cross and the Bible when the priest holds them out to you, and when you see others crossing themselves, do you the same." And I followed her advice, although at first each time I did so I nearly died of timidity, believing, with some reason, that all eyes were fixed upon me.

Oh, all those eyes eternally upon you! That is indeed one of the biggest trials I had to learn to bear. Thousands of eyes everywhere, and no one to assure me that they were kindly, approving eyes, eyes which understood my extreme youth and were ready to forgive many a blunder. But this easy way of seeing things did not enter into the plan of my instructors. Those whose duty it was to initiate me into my new life had only one end in view; I was to be taught the meaning of Duty with a big "D," and it would have been imprudent to allow me to imagine that others could be more indulgent. No half-measures for King Carol; his creed was with a vengeance "all work and no play."

Owing to the tremendous snowdrifts, our train arrived several hours late. Whole regiments had been ordered out to clear the line, but even those several hours late were not late enough for me; such was my terror of the ordeal before me that I kept sending prayers up to God that the train should never reach its goal. My fingers became quite clammy, so desperately did I cling to Nando's hand. He was exceedingly loving, but not very reassuring, as he too was anxious; I could see it, although I did not know him very well then. Later, I always knew by a certain paleness about the nostrils of his supremely aristocratic nose when Nando was nervous. We tried to smile at each other, but they were rather poor little smiles and I felt tears dangerously near.

Our engine began to utter a series of long-drawn shrieks as though agonizingly glad to reach home; from afar came a sound of music, our train was slowly puffing into the station. Courage! nothing now could

stop the hour fixed by Fate for my first encounter with those that were to become my people. . . .

The wheels groaned, the music became louder ; now the troops lined up on the edge of the platform began cheering. Timidly peeping out of the window I liked the soldiers' faces, stalwart, swarthy little men with dark intelligent eyes and very white teeth. They wore dark grey coats and had queer-shaped hats with long cocks' plumes hanging far down on one side, rather in the style of the Italian Bersaglieri.

"Those are my Chasseurs," explained Nando, "the First Battalion of which I am major ; I was promoted major when we married."

So those were Nando's Chasseurs ; the possessive pronoun had something reassuring about it, gave you a family feeling. Strangely enough, although everything else was at first alien in my new home, from the very beginning I had a consoling feeling about the army. I never felt a stranger amongst our soldiers, I seemed immediately accepted by them without conditions and without distrust. Was it perhaps a prognostication of the future, of those glorious but terrible times which we were destined to endure together ?

Perhaps—

The train had stopped.

The music and the cheering had risen to a deafening din. It was especially the soldiers who made the most noise. How they cheered ! Their mouths were wide open showing rows of strong white teeth, and how their eyes flashed ! All through my life I have heard them cheer thus, even in that terrible winter of 1916-17 when they were but tragic ghosts of their former selves, ragged, starved scarecrows, poor remnants of once proud regiments, with tattered uniforms and on their feet bandages instead of boots. But even then they cheered, bravely marching past, dragging their frozen, tired feet through the snow. Yes, even then they cheered and their eyes which had seen death in every form, had contemplated every horror of war and retreat, stared into mine, and there was still confidence in that look they sent me, a sort of dumb trust which suffering and defeat could not uproot.

Nando sprang out first and was warmly greeted by Uncle who stood well to the fore, heading the rows of officials crowding behind him. He stretched up his arms to help me down and then clasped me to his heart.

He was trembling, he too was full of emotion. This was a great day, a day of success and achievement, but there was also pain in it, for Uncle also had known sacrifice, he too had buried more than one dream.

According to correct precedence the officials were presented to me. Everybody was there, the Prime Minister, Lascar Catargi, with all the members of the Cabinet, several of whom had been at our wedding; the mayor of the capital, who was then Triandafil, if I rightly remember, the rector of the University, the president of the Chambers of the Senate, representatives of the Law, of the Army, of the Church, the chief of the police, and their wives had mostly come with them, each one having donned beautiful new toilettes for the occasion, for Roumanian ladies are exceedingly smart. The music continued to play, the soldiers to cheer. The din was tremendous. The mayor pushed forward, offering the traditional bread and salt; he made a welcoming speech which no one could hear because of the noise. Finally the ladies worked their way through the crowd of men and absolutely buried me under showers of heavy bouquets which I simply could not hold. My precious dress was trodden on by a hundred eager feet, I was crushed and tossed hither and thither as a cork on a tumultuous sea, for Roumanian receptions are warm but not orderly, and the one who is being received has a pretty hard struggle to keep afloat.

I was much impressed by the Roumanian type of beauty. Those dark Oriental-looking women fascinated me. There was especially a certain Madame Rasti, wife of the Prefect of Police, whom I could not take my eyes off. There was something of the odalisque in her olive complexion and heavy slumbrous eyes. Clad all in blood-red, sable-trimmed velvet, she was indeed of striking appearance, the like of which I had never seen, except perhaps in Aunt Zina of childhood's memory.

One of the faces I remembered from Sigmaringen was Peter Carp, who screwed in his eye-glass to have a good look at me; his expression was ironical but not unkind. Somehow I liked his face. There was also my special friend General Vladescu; we greeted each other like old acquaintances and there was also of course Ion Kalinderu, well to the fore, and on whose rotund person the Grand Cordon of the Star of Roumania seemed to assume special importance. Somehow no other decoration looked as red or honourable as his. But it was all very confusing, very frightening, though perhaps a little less terrible than I had

imagined, and this was because everybody looked so pleased and so welcoming that they really made me feel as though this was a great day of rejoicing for them all.

The next move was to the Metropolitan Church for a Te Deum. In Roumania all official festivities begin with a Te Deum in church.

We took our places in a wonderful silver and blue coach drawn by four huge, coal-black Russian stallions with enormously long tails and manes. Uncle sat beside me and Nando opposite. Mamma never having permitted a shut carriage, even when it was bitterly cold, I was rather shocked that we should be shut in behind glass windows; I thought the people might feel slighted. All Mamma's convictions and principles had been so strong that she had, so to say, inoculated them into my blood. It took years before I could become free of them and some, as for instance her feeling about open air, exercise and punctuality, are as strong in me to-day as they were then. There was an incisive force about Mamma which set her stamp upon us for all time.

In spite of the bitter cold, the streets were crowded, all the troops had been turned out and we were given a warm reception. Full of curiosity I gazed out of my glass casket upon this new world, these new people who were to be mine. My impressions were confused, I hardly knew what I felt. I tried to bow as graciously as possible, but bowing is an art which has to be learnt little by little; in those days I was stiff as a puppet, and as in all things this was caused by my insufferable, youthful self-consciousness. The moment one becomes more interested in other people than in oneself, shyness disappears. Ease of manner is not vanity, but victory over oneself.

The Te Deum was very impressive. I loved the dark, mellow-tinted church with its ancient frescoes, its fine old silver candlesticks and lamps. In those days I was no connoisseur of old icons and Byzantine art, but from the first I felt their beauty and atmosphere, they spoke strongly to the artist within me, but the priests' voices were very poor in comparison with those I had heard in Russia and in Mamma's little chapels; besides, they had, alas! a way of singing through their noses to which no really musical ear could agree. The chants, which in Russia were so compelling and uplifting, had no grandeur here; in fact

they marred the otherwise really beautiful service. Remembering Mamma's injunctions, I followed the lead, though somewhat sheepishly, when the *bine credincioşii* (the true believers) crossed themselves, but it made me feel a bit of a fraud. It was only very much later in life that I realized that there are politenesses of the heart which are not a comedy nor weak concessions, but an understanding of right values and of those small things important to each man in his own sphere.

Here also I bore the brunt of a thousand eyes, looking through me, appraising, criticizing, eyes full of curiosity, pity, interest or dawning sympathy, each man according to the depth or shallowness of his own heart and soul. But I suffered; I felt small, foolish, insignificant and "exceeding lonely amidst the multitude." A slow procession back through the streets, more troops, more crowds, more cheering, and looking up I saw the Union Jack and the Roumanian colours, floating side by side from every house. The beloved old flag! Tears came into my eyes, that flag meant home! At that time the blue, yellow and red meant nothing to me, not yet did they touch my heart. And all of a sudden, there in that royal glass case, rolling through unknown streets with two almost unknown men seated beside me, I was invaded by a feeling of utter desolation. Crowds, cheering, music, noise, welcome, rejoicing, and although the central figure around which all this fuss was being made, in reality I was but a poor, forlorn little stranger in a strange land. . . .

Finally we arrived at the palace, which was not a very imposing building, squat, low and of no distinctive style. With a clatter of hoofs we drove up to one of the front doors to the inevitable sound of music and cheering. With great ceremony the King conducted me up the grand staircase, a fine marble construction, imposing and monumental, branching off on both sides at the first landing to a pillared hall above. Uncle's emotion was evident, and I can still hear the click of his sword on the marble of the steps as we mounted.

White-clad schoolgirls were lined up on both sides, singing songs of welcome while they threw flowers before us; it was a very pretty sight.

Officers, high officials, court dignitaries, servants in gala liveries,

and Uncle at my side, sober, steady, but deeply moved for all his outward calm, and close on our heels Nando, pale, anxious, nervously eager to get rid of all these people so as to be at last alone with his bride. . . .

The apartment prepared for us was to the right of the grand stairs, the doors were thrown open and Uncle led me into my new home. . . . My new home!

A feeling of utter despair came over me at the sight of the rooms that had been prepared for us, and that, into the bargain, had, I believe, been newly done up in our honour. I am not going to weary my readers with a detailed description of that apartment; let it simply be said that it was German *mauvais goût* at its worst, when it sets out to be heavy and cruel; *Altdeutsch* and bad rococo! From my point of view they were a disaster. My disappointment and disillusion actually amounted to physical pain, I felt my already heavy heart sink lower and lower, till I wondered if it would ever end sinking. Rich, dark, pompous, unhomelike, inhospitable rooms, all windows, doors and fixtures and nowhere a cosy corner, nowhere a fireplace, nowhere any flowers, nowhere a comfortable chair!

Uncle embraced me once more, expressed his hope that this was an auspicious day, the beginning of much happiness in my new home, and then he left us.

My new home. . . .

I sank down into a seat, a hard *Altdeutsch* seat; Nando came over to me, took me into his arms.

"You are tired?"

"Yes, a little. . . ."

"Those hateful official ceremonies?"

"Yes, they were rather long."

"You must have a rest now, there will be a big dinner this evening."

"Yes . . . a big dinner. . . ."

And there were many big dinners, one after another, and many ceremonies, and much rejoicing and many faces, all of them friendly, welcoming, but all of them new. Nowhere a stable point, nothing to hang on to except Nando, but here in Roumania Nando was Crown Prince, Uncle's nephew, a man of duty, trained to do Uncle's bidding, trained to see with Uncle's eyes, almost to use Uncle's words.

Duty, it was all duty, from the early morning when we got up, to the evening when we went to bed. Duty, duty, and it was winter and my rooms were *Altdeutsch* and rococo. And both Uncle and Nando said I must have no friends: no friends, because here in this new country it was dangerous to have friends; politics, jealousies, intrigues. . . .

Yes, they told me many things, there were many words, they talked politics, they had long military discussions, they smoked strong cigars and all they said was Chinese to me. And outside there was snow and frost, and no one seemed to understand anything about flowers here; there was a single camellia plant in my room with one waxy red and white flower on it, only one and that soon fell off, and the other buds did not open—poor hard little buds!

That was behind the scenes, but I am an optimist, and I hate people who wail, so I am going to show you the outside of it, what it looked like to others who had no entry to the *Altdeutsch* and rococo rooms, all doors, windows and fixtures. . . .

Beyond those doors I was being greatly "feasted." Every day there was some official function, all in my honour, dinners, balls, huge official receptions and deputations from all the four corners of the country who presented gorgeously decorated addresses and often brought some gift: Roumanian embroideries, carpets, carved or painted chests, books and icons and other objects representative of national industries. The ladies of the Liberal party, not then in power, brought me an artistically chased golden casket with a goodly sum of money with which I was to found some useful charity. The party in power offered us a large silver table centre with symbolic figures of very fine workmanship. But mostly the gifts were of a humbler kind.

Every degree of state dignitary and functionary passed before us, representatives of every nationality, every creed, every craft, every profession, every cloth. Civilians, soldiers, priests and even monks, also a deputation of Russian coachmen to present a silver platter with the traditional bread and salt.

It was interesting, but it was also very tiring and for some unknown reason I was not feeling well. I imagined it had something to do with the change of climate, perhaps the different food? But generally I had been absolutely immune to changes, and had I not the advantage

of a Russian digestion? Was there perhaps some inexplicable change going on within me? Anyhow, I was feeling different from my usual self; depressed, no vitality, no sense of humour and a huge disgust for every sort of smell; it was quite distressing!

My trousseau dresses were brought out one after the other. I did my best to look as well and smart as possible so as to do honour to my husband. The two Louises made joint efforts to smarten up my coiffure; they curled and waved my poor hair with more goodwill than dexterity, sometimes in fact they made rather a sight of me. This I felt without being able to canalize their excellent intentions, myself being quite green in the art of dress. Besides, I was looking pinched, there were dark circles round my eyes, I had not my usual face, my cheeks were pale, I was getting thin and strangest of all my nose seemed to be growing longer! This was particularly noticeable in the first photographs taken of me as a married woman. I had a favourite velvet evening dress, a creation of Laferrière then *en vogue* in Paris. I disliked myself in many of my dresses, but I imagined that this particular gown was really becoming; it was a curious old plum colour with a delicious bloom on it and was made up with old lace which gave it the look of a costume of the Vandyke period. The tint of the velvet looked well with the turquoises Papa had given me. I was always fond of colour harmonies, and the greeny blue of the pale stones together with the old plum pleased my eye. Everything was still dormant in me, taste as well as intelligence; I was groping, and there were only occasional little flashes of light.

So I had myself photographed in this gown so as to send it home, and in this picture I noticed that my snubby little nose had lengthened! Was it because my cheeks were less chubby, or what? All this was very disturbing and there was no one to discuss it with. Lady Monson was still here, but I saw little of her; she was caught up in a whirl of mundane gaieties; besides, I was most jealously guarded by Nando and Uncle, and allowed to see almost no one except those received officially in crowds. Even my lady-in-waiting, Madame Grecianu, was only allowed to come to me when strictly on business. I was to be kept away from every outside influence. Ever since that trouble with poor Aunt Elisabeth and Hélène Vacarescu, uncle and nephew were filled with watchful mistrust, and this made me almost a prisoner. Uncle

had laid down strict laws by which my husband religiously abode, as they just then entirely fitted in with his desires. But of course this was not exactly conducive to a cheerful life.

Looking back upon it I cannot help being astounded at their lack of knowledge of psychology when it came to treating a very young and lonely woman. I was like a tightly shut bud. They seemed afraid of its opening and hemmed me in with laws, defences and restrictions as though they could oblige their flower to bloom according to their own desires and at their appointed time.

Once when asked what I compared myself to, I answered: "To a tree which has grown through a stone wall." Already in those very early days my poor little roots were pressing against the wall. . . .

Amongst the many and mostly dull ceremonies I was being submitted to there was one which was exceedingly picturesque and gave me real pleasure. Nando and I were to be sponsors at the marriage of thirty-two peasant couples, chosen from the thirty-two Roumanian districts. According to Orthodox rites there are sponsors for marriages as well as for baptisms. This colourful thirty-two-fold wedding was celebrated at the Metropolitan Church and was indeed a pretty sight owing to the bright peasant dresses and the many lighted tapers against the dim, frescoed background of the old church. It was a picture my eyes took possession of with deep pleasure. Once happily "joined together" the thirty-two couples, seated in their own rustic carts drawn by magnificent grey oxen with huge gilded horns, passed in a grand procession before the palace windows, an attractive sight indeed, in which I discovered some of the romance I had thought to find in this far land. From the very first I was strongly attracted to the peasants, to those brave and patient tillers of the soil; so that rural pageant stands out as a pleasant memory. Less to my liking were the enormous receptions of all the Bucarest ladies gathered together for presentation. They were lined up in two rows all along the length of the large gold and white ballroom. Uncle gave me his arm and as we passed down that formidable front, he presented each lady; their name was legion and they were of every age and of every degree, enough to make the stoutest spirit quail. As two are company and three are none, Nando had to trot behind us, rather an embarrassing proceeding,

but luckily for him there were familiar faces amongst that alarming army of women.

My heart would sink as the doors were thrown open to reveal those endless rows, waiting to be smiled upon. I was distressingly stiff, awkward and tongue-tied and at a terrible disadvantage because of my insufficient French.

Out of this sea of faces two women stand out as a blessed relief merely because they had the courage to address me first instead of, according to protocol, waiting for me to begin the conversation. One was Madame Cesianu (later Marquise Belloy) a stout, cheerful lady, irrepressibly good-humoured and talkative. The other was Hélène Perticari, wife of one of Uncle's A.D.C.'s, a lovely woman with naturally wavy auburn hair and large round eyes placed far apart under perfectly arched brows; a woman somewhat the type of Lily Brayton, whose beauty later I so much admired on the English stage. The spark of sympathy kindled at that early hour grew to a steady flame as years advanced, and to-day both these ladies are cherished friends.

I continued to be impressed by the type of Roumanian beauty; that olive skin, those dark eyes and raven hair were most attractive, but in my opinion the women were much better looking than the men. The more Oriental the type the more I admired it, and I shall always remember Madame Simu seated in her box during the gala performance, so alluringly exotic with a cascade of red roses falling from her shoulders. A slim, blonde, nondescript little creature all in white and turquoise with a trimming of innocent pale pink rosebuds, I gazed down upon her, full of admiration, and she looked up at me, wondering perhaps at the excessive fairness of my hair and complexion; it was indeed the meeting of East and West.

The performance itself—*A Midsummer Night's Dream*—did not impress me much; I understood no Roumanian and although great care had been expended, the Roumanian theatre was still in its infancy. Since then I have seen remarkable progress in this direction.

CHAPTER XIV

SOCIETY IN THE CAPITAL

IN its turn all the feminine world of Bucarest was of course exceedingly interested in this little English princess who had come to live in its midst, and more than one motherly heart was, I believe, moved when they saw how ridiculously young and immature I was.

Those with whom, owing to their official position, I most often came together were the ladies of the actual Government, for in Roumania the ministers have a predominant position and are conspicuous guests on every official occasion.

The ladies of the Conservative Government were headed by sober old Madame Lascar Catargi, a good old body but hardly of the decorative sort. There were also Madame Jaques and Madame Alexander Lahovary, sisters-in-law; the first-mentioned small and exceedingly black with a large mouth and many teeth, who always looked at you through her lorgnette, the other tall, stately, with natural, or unnatural, fair hair (in those days I could not distinguish the difference). Madame Symka, as Society called her, was the great wit of the actual Government in opposition to Madame Sturdza, the sharpened tongue of the Liberal party. These two ladies had much to say of each other, but their remarks were more amusing than charitable. Of the two, Madame Symka was certainly the more attractive. Later we became firm friends, but at first I was frightened of her; she was so astoundingly self-assured, so terrifically "French," so embarrassingly intelligent, and she was so much more painted than I was accustomed to. In fact, she awed me and made me feel small; there was a chasm between Madame Symka Lahovary and the somewhat prejudiced old home atmosphere to which I had been accustomed. There was also Madame Peter Carp (daughter of dear old Marie Cantacuzène who

had been present at our marriage), a severely simple lady of the motherly, good-housewife type, but very cultured, and well-read as were all Marie Cantacuzène's daughters. Her attire was old-fashioned, her evening dresses bared her shoulders as in the crinoline period, she also made solemn curtsies which were quite in keeping with her whole demeanour. Then there was Madame Take Ionescu, a tall English-woman with short hair, a passionate rider, side by side with whom I have had many a good gallop, and there was Madame Marghiloman (born Stirbey, later Madame Ion Bratianu), to whom I felt greatly drawn. She was much the youngest of them all and although somewhat forbidding, when she laughed had a delicious way of crinkling up her nose. There was something entirely upright about Elise Marghiloman which attracted me, but there was also a certain prickliness about her which made approach difficult. Although much kindness was shown me I felt very lost, and Nando's painful anxiety to prevent any friendship was of course little conducive to any more genial contact.

It was, in fact, many years before I was allowed to know anyone more intimately. This made life exceedingly lonely and was one of the reasons why I took a long time in becoming a really good Roumanian.

Second to the Government the Corps Diplomatique played a great part in Uncle's order of existence. Berlin and Vienna were well to the fore, France was dealt with politely; Russia, though always distrusted, was treated with the minutest care and civility, but it was politeness due rather to apprehension than to affection. England in those early days had no close contact with Roumania. The two countries had few interests in common. Prince Bülow was German minister at Bucarest and Gudehowski was the Austrian. Later both these gentlemen made big careers. Old Fonton, the Russian, was a pleasant, animated little man, very thin, with excitable gestures, snow-white whiskers and eyes which seemed to pop out of his head. I remember how Uncle kept comparing him favourably to Hitrovo, his predecessor, who had been a dangerous intriguer. There was no British Minister at that moment, but Sir Charles Hardinge was Chargé d'Affaires. His wife was charming and both were very good-looking.

King Carol was as well versed in foreign as in home politics. In

fact everything was politics, they were his very *raison d'être*. He carefully weighed all that he did and said, always calculating the consequences, thereby, according to my negligible judgment, infinitely complicating life and creating difficulties out of things which might have been quite simple if taken more simply. It is not for me to judge my betters, but I suffered many years under his none too light sway; it was a good school; to-day I know how to be grateful for it, but for all that it meant much bitterness, saddening our youth and sometimes driving us to the verge of desperation or revolt.

It was especially my husband who suffered; he was never a rebel, for a certain glorious joy can be found in being a rebel. I for one have known this joy, but Nando was brought up to obey. Never was there a more loyal Crown Prince. He listened to his uncle in all things, blindly following his lead, submitting to his every demand, never revolting and always eager to propitiate any differences which arose between the tyrannical old gentleman and myself. It was a thankless rôle to play, as he often found himself between hammer and anvil. He did not always agree with his uncle's views, often feeling irritated, sometimes even humiliated by his overruling manner, but he remained pliant, acquiescent and patient to a degree which I admired although it often made my blood boil.

Our youth is a long tale of abnegation. Outwardly happy and seemingly surrounded by affection and goodwill, it was nevertheless often a weary and thorny path on which, day by day, something had to be given up, some desire crushed, some dream buried, some impulse trodden upon. It was one ceaseless renunciation and surrendering of will, a continual looking on and seeing others possess, enjoy and do those things which were denied to us. Yes, it was a hard school. I do not regret, I believe that all things have a meaning, even the hardest; every humiliating surrender, every bitter tear, all go for the building up of something even if we do not see it at the time. But I cannot say that I enjoyed it. I hated it in fact with every fibre of my healthy being. I loathed this relentless form of education, which was a continual struggle for domination and crushing of will. I admit that it taught me many a lesson, it strengthened my muscles, taught me to be unselfish and gave me a strong foundation for those later years when I had to shoulder my own responsibilities.

Once, after my husband had come to the throne and we were looking back upon our youth, I expressed the opinion that I had been given a healthy training. "For you, perhaps," said Nando. "You were a rebel, you could even find pleasure in a good fight. I was born obedient, battle was not my style; you had always high spirits, the joy of life was strong in you, so you have not been crushed. You thrived upon opposition, but I feel that in me some spring was broken, it was not necessary to be so severe with me. I had been brought up to a strong sense of duty, whilst you . . ." Here he paused.

"—whilst I?"

He looked at me and smiled: "Whilst you were not brought up at all, you simply grew."

He had said a true word; I had not been brought up at all, I simply grew. I was a child of nature, I had nothing to throw off, no one had chained my will, so I was able to grow through a stone wall.

The moment had come for Lady Monson and for Colonel Howard to leave. They had been lavishly entertained and most hospitably received everywhere, but their time was up, and having given me over to my new family and country, their mission was at an end and they were to depart.

The last link with the past was to be broken.

How well I remember my last interview with Lady Monson. I can smile to-day when looking back upon it, but at the time it was tragic enough.

She found me seated in the disastrous rococo room, my so-called "boudoir." I had been making fruitless efforts to try and make it look homelike, but had given up in despair, no cosy corner could be wrung from its false, inhospitable elegance. I had collapsed amidst the half-unpacked treasures from home, my wedding presents lay strewn about on tables, chairs and floor, it was like an inglorious battlefield; I had been vanquished in the struggle. Everything was out of place in this heavily pretentious setting; my dearest possessions took on a forlorn and reproachful aspect; they were as homesick as I was.

I certainly must have looked a poor, forsaken little human being.

Lady Monson, always voluble, hurried towards me with many exclamations, her attitude was one of humorous commiseration:

"My dear child! you do not look very cheerful, and all your pretty things on the floor! Are you feeling seedy? You're so pale."

"Yes, I'm not feeling well, I can't understand what's the matter with me. I feel giddy, everything makes me sick, food disgusts me, and I, who never felt the difference of climate, cannot get accustomed to this one. Everything makes me feel sick; smells, noises, faces, even colours. I'm altogether changed, I don't recognize my own self!"

"Oh! but, my dear, this is an excellent sign, how delighted everybody will be!"

"Delighted? Why? Because I'm feeling sick and miserable?" I was aghast and stared at her horrified, wondering if she was crazy.

"But, my dear, you surely know what it means when a young wife begins feeling sick?"

"What should it mean?" More and more preplexed I felt humilatingly near tears.

"You don't mean to say no one ever told you?" . . . It was Lady Monson's turn to be aghast.

"Told me what?" My eyes were filling with fear. . . . "Told me what?"

So the good lady sat down beside me amidst the depressed flotsam brought from home and tried to explain to me, tried to make me understand what was happening and why Nando, Uncle, and with them the whole country, would be so glad. . . .

Curiously enough I took it tragically. I felt somehow as though I had been trapped.

So this is what they wanted me for, they wanted me to give them an heir! But I had only just left home, Mamma, Ducky. I was feeling so ill, so lonely; there was no one to go to and no one to talk to; there were no flowers and no one seemed to care about fresh air and out-door exercise, and everything brought from home looked so out of place here in these awful rooms where there were no corners one could sit in. It was no good even trying to arrange them, nothing was any good. And all the morning Nando had military duties, and at lunch he and Uncle talked about things I could not understand and then they smoked cigars and went on talking even when lunch and dinner were over, and cigar-smoke made me more sick than anything else, and they were

such huge cigars, you never could hope that they would come to an end. And in the afternoon when I wanted to drive out, Nando says there is no place to drive to, and he says I must have no friends, that we cannot have any friends in this country and Uncle says . . .

Yes, it all came bubbling out and when put into words suddenly revealed to me all the despair that had been slowly accumulating, and finally bursting into tears I laid my head on the shoulder of the good lady who patted me in a motherly, though somewhat patronizing way, for she was feeling wise, and hugely but sadly superior to this foolish child to whom no one had explained anything. It was distressing enough no doubt, but it was life, and life had its hard sides, but I must not make a tragedy out of small miseries; all beginnings were difficult, and after all I ought to be proud of satisfying my new country's ambitions; think of the joy if it were a boy! Lady Monson spoke wisely, but she also spoke as one looking back upon life, as one already out of touch with the distress of the young. The long road which lay behind her had made of her a philosopher. She knew that all things, even griefs and pains, were transient. To her my pain looked small, unreal, rather pathetic and just a little absurd, which it probably was. But for me, who had all my life before me with its daily bitter little discoveries, it was real enough and huge and terrifying and above all I was lonely and homesick; a poor uprooted little simpleton with a fair head stuffed full of dreams.

This was not at all a romantic country, it was all prohibition, interdiction and politics. And Uncle. . . .

That was always the refrain, the end of every sentence: "And Uncle,"—"Der Onkel," the incomprehensible shadow which already at Sigmaringen had darkened Nando's joy.

"Der Onkel" . . . but it was no good trying to explain; even Lady Monson who had come from home could not understand. . . .

The months which followed were uniform, grey and depressing, and seldom did anything come to brighten their tediousness, which was aggravated by my state of health.

Letters from home only made matters worse. Mamma, following up her brave attitude towards life in general and towards her children in particular, kept writing how gay and happy they all were at home, how

she had taken Ducky to St. Petersburg for the season, so as to give her a change. Every epistle was overflowing with descriptions of the joyful things they were doing and at the same time I was scolded for writing such dull, uninteresting letters.

"Give yourself a little trouble to write amusing descriptions of your life, your surroundings, tell us about what you do and about the people you see," she urged. But, alas! there were no amusing descriptions to make. Since the official festivities had come to an end, I saw no one, and day followed upon day, a dismal chain without a break. Nor in those days could I see the humorous side of my "patheticness."

But worst of all, with a mistaken idea of cheering me up, she had forbidden Ducky to write to me the real state of her feelings, "so as not to depress her," she said. Ducky was only to write about her gaieties, her balls, her friends who were filling up the place I once occupied. In reality Ducky was moping as much for me as I was for her. She had in fact been carried off to St. Petersburg so as to help her over the parting which she had minded almost tragically, for her nature was deep and loving and always somewhat stormy.

With a strange lack of psychology, Mamma imagined it would cheer me to hear about the fun my sister was having, whilst I was in reality only hungering to hear how she missed me, longed for me, deplored my absence. Mamma did not seem to realize that when you feel like an exile or one cast out from Paradise, it is no consolation to hear of another's joy in the Eden you had to give up. Youth has a huge capacity for being miserable and I was too young to rejoice over the thought of my once inseparable companion being happy, gay and successful without me. I felt like a prisoner behind iron bars peeping out upon an impossibly happy world out of which he had been cast.

So there was pain everywhere, and the pity I felt for myself darkened the face of the sun.

Not being able to reconcile myself to the inhospitality of the rococo boudoir I took refuge in a small, plain, but harmless dressing-room leading off from the bedroom which was also one of my terrors, being all hard corners and unnecessary steps. Here in this back chamber there was a couch to which I fled on those days when I was feeling particularly sick.

The two Louises played, of course, a large part in my lonely life.

They too were homesick and followed with anxiety the phases of their young mistress's distress.

Louise Lang was in herself a humorous figure had I only been able to realize it, but for the moment my sense of humour was at a low ebb; but looking back I smile at her memory.

That worthy person was magnificently certain that royalty really descended from beings not far removed from the gods. The Virgin Mary and royalty were the two outstanding landmarks of her simple faith. A crucifix hung over her bed, she said her beads with passionate regularity and she positively believed that the Devil had a tail. Louise Lang was in fact a species becoming more and more extinct; the species of the old family servant convinced that the King and her masters could "do no wrong." . . .

The remembrance of "old Louise," as I still call her in my mind, is indissolubly connected with a sad little episode which the loneliness of those first months of exile made almost tragic.

I had brought from home a bullfinch much resembling the bullfinch we used to tease in Grandmamma Queen's sacred apartments over which Grandpapa's many portraits shed his shadow, or was it his light? It was an enchanting little bird and had been taught to pipe "*Freut Euch des Lebens*," a popular German *Volkslied*, a sweet little song but rather ironical perhaps under the actual circumstances. Bully sang it perfectly, but occasionally he would make a mistake, he would stop and scold himself in the most comic way, beginning over and over again till he got it right. And Bully had the same way as Grandmamma's bird of getting thin when angry, and when pleased of puffing himself out into a ball of pink and grey fluff. He would then hop from one side to another of his perch uttering the most endearing little pipes and poking his broad beak through the bars to be kissed.

I adored Bully and Bully adored me, but he also loved Louise, and his third love was an old servant who had come with us from Sigmaringen. We three received the homage of his songs, he sensed our coming from afar and he would greet us with his cheerful "*Freut Euch des Lebens*" even before he saw us. Everybody else was scolded and screeched at.

Bully became the supreme, nay, almost the only consolation of my

loneliness. Nando was away all the morning at his barracks; I was allowed to see no one, hardly even my old lady-in-waiting. I was not yet accustomed to be sufficient unto myself and felt too ill to read more than a few hours a day. So much did old Louise and I play with Bully that he became quite tame, and when the window was shut, we always allowed him to fly quite freely about the rooms.

At the first feeling of spring in the air, our winged companion became importantly active, picking up off the floor all sorts of odds and ends for the building of a more than problematical nest. He would follow old Louise or me about from room to room, sometimes flying, sometimes running across the floor with comic little hops. It was difficult to say who loved the bird most, Louise or I; Bully had indeed become the central joy of our lives.

But this is a sad world, joys are not eternal, mostly indeed they are all too short, and the joy over Bully was destined to be too short.

One day I was feeling particularly miserable and lay curled on my "couch of refuge," as I called the sofa in my ugly little dressing-room, which was papered a dull patterned grey, the colour of fog and defeat. So wretched was I that I could hardly lift my head. Old Louise was standing beside me, discoursing upon some homely subject in her prim, precise, monotonous way. Her talk was punctuated by occasional little curtsies in keeping with the respect in which she held my poor little person. Precious Bully was hopping about the floor, busy as always gathering together material for that nest which was destined never to be built.

Having come to the end of her dragging explanations, old Louise made a step backwards, ready to drop one of her inevitable curtsies. Only one step. . . . You will hardly be able to bear hearing it . . . but . . . That one step backwards was the end of our Bully and of his brave little song and also of his small hopes of building a nest. With that single step backwards old Louise crushed the one joy of our lonely homesick days. Louise trod on Bully. "For each man kills the thing he loves. . . ."

Never more did the cheerful "*Freut Euch des Lebens*" sound through the drab apartment. It had only needed that one step backwards, and Bully, with his song and his nesting ambitions, and with him all the

joy he had been to us, was over for ever. Bully was wiped out as though he had never been.

I leave to the imagination of each to realize what the death of Bully meant to decorous old Louise and to her lonely little mistress.

Madame Grecianu, my lady-in-waiting, who had three grown-up daughters of her own, understood that the regime I was being submitted to was not the very best for a young woman who was to give an heir to the expectant country. So she plucked up her courage and went to the King.

"Our princess is moping," declared the old lady; "in her state of health this is not a good thing. Young people need company. Such absolute isolation is a mistake. She ought to be amused, to see people. It is not right that she should be exclusively left to her home-sickness and to the company of her maids."

Uncle, who in spite of his political austerity, really loved me, was impressed by this "voice out of the wilderness." The case must be looked into, it was serious, an heir was the country's most cherished hope, nothing must endanger it. So the wise men of the realm put their heads together, Ion Kalinderu being chief councillor and the Prime Minister also having his say. This was a State affair, for was not H.R.H. bearing the future Crown Prince?

La Princesse s'ennuie. This was indeed perplexing. What form of amusement could be safely offered her which, while being sufficiently agreeable, would not give her undue illusions about freedom? What entertainments were in keeping with the programme elaborated for the education of one so young and unprepared and in whom the seeds of frivolity and independence might be lying dormant? Weighty problem! No false move must be made, no wrong door must be opened, no dangerous key must be put into her hand.

After much pondering and weighing of the matter those "stern men with empires in their brains," every one of them beyond the age of dreams and illusions, hit upon the bright idea that tea-parties must be organized for "the poor child."

But in Roumania, according to King Carol's orderly conception of things, nothing must be undertaken *à la légère*, the pros and the cons must be duly examined, no one's susceptibilities must be ignored, no one

must be slighted or offended, and as everyone was claiming the honour of coming into contact with the country's latest importation, the social ladder must be strictly taken into consideration.

One would have to begin at the beginning: The wives of Ministers, generals, judges, professors, etc., were the first on the list; later, when all the important weighty people had been waded through, a few younger ones might *perhaps* be included: *Aber dies muss man noch reiflich überlegen*. This was one of Uncle's favourite formulas.

So tea-parties were organized in a deadly dull room with pompeian-red walls and ugly over-gilded chairs. As principal decoration, a series of war pictures representing King Carol during the campaign of 1876. Uncle under fire, Uncle on the ramparts, Uncle passing the Danube on a bridge of boats, Uncle on a prancing horse, Uncle in a snowstorm, Uncle receiving Osman Pasha's sword.

And beneath these patriotic pictures sat the sad little exile and received lean ladies and fat ladies, kind ladies and supercilious ladies, smart ladies and shabby ladies, ladies that were wrinkled and ladies that were painted, ladies who talked volubly and ladies who were almost as shy as the little stranger herself; but of these there were few, for Roumanians in general have a great flow of words at their disposal.

Madame Grecianu, sensing the hopeless boredom of these gatherings, flitted backwards and forwards like a grey moth between the different groups, doing her best to lighten the heavy atmosphere, whilst the unfortunate little creature who was to be "amused" sat all but mute with an agonized expression in her eyes, wondering if she would get through the ordeal without collapsing, for the creating of an heir was causing her certain discomforts over which she had no control and which even the Spartan principles with which her mother had inculcated her could not help her to overcome.

I remember a sea trip in the company of one of the most ceremonious, elegant, polite and respectful gentlemen civilization could produce. But the sea made sport of all his poor little shams. He became greener and greener, conversation died by degrees, and finally, draping the last shreds of his dignity about him, he tottered to the side of the vessel, not even finding the energy to flee where he would not be seen.

Thus it was with me at these deadly parties, during which I was the

object of kindly but penetrating curiosity. I was as though on exhibition, an interesting acquisition everyone had a right to look at and criticize. I did my small best to be patient and good and long-suffering. I donned my smartest trousseau dresses, wore my politest smile, aired my best French, but all in vain: "The lovely new-coming little Crown Prince"—as an enthusiastic Dalmatian, a generation later, once said to my little Serbian Queen whilst offering her a silver dagger for the one not yet there—"The lovely new-coming little Crown Prince" had no mercy upon his seventeen-year-old mother and overthrew all her poor, brave little pretences.

An added torture was that we had been brought up with the stiff British ideas of that period when it was considered improper to speak of a coming family event. *Tout au plus*, it was discreetly whispered that such-and-such a lady was "in delicate health," and this confidence was never made when the children were in the room; that would have been most unseemly! But in this country nearer the Rising Sun, none of these little pruderies held good. There was a great glory in the fact that a child was to be born into the world, and of course this was magnified a hundredfold when it was a royal child.

So indiscreet questions were asked of me; I was openly congratulated and I was expected to give details about a condition of which I understood nothing myself. It was a ghastly ordeal, which each time made me feel that I must sink into the ground.

The wise men's inspiration of how to amuse a homesick princess did not therefore prove a great success. The cure threatened to become more cruel than the illness. But having had her say for the moment Madame Grecianu felt she could do no more.

Here I feel that I must call back to memory a quaint figure who at that depressed period crossed my path.

I was suffering from toothache, cruelly, abominably, I was one constant throb of pain. This, I was told, was also in connexion with "the lovely new-coming little Crown Prince," and that was supposed to make my suffering less, which it did not.

But with my toothache Dr. Young came into my life.

Dr. Young was an English subject, but born an American. He was one of Nature's gentlemen, but he was also original.

His art was great, but not painless for the one upon whom he was to use it; nevertheless, his visits became a solace to my solitude.

Middle-aged, dry and humorous, his face was quite that of the "Uncle Sam," goatee and all. He said "good day" without effusion and his "good-bye" was equally emotionless, but somehow you all the same felt that he was pleased to see you. He was a collector of good pictures, could discourse upon Roumanian art and always came accompanied by a neat little store of anecdotes about his clients of which even the most comic were related without a smile or the flicker of an eyelid. His calm was sculptural, but his face had settled into wrinkles of fun. His one weakness was a pronounced sense of opposition which occasionally induced him to contradict himself, because it was ever beneath his dignity to agree with you on even the most simple subject.

When specially catering for his approval I would present a question to him the wrong way round, which occasionally trapped him into saying what I wanted to hear.

In spite of what he stood for, this queer personage with his still queerer ways became a friend in need. He tortured my upper and my lower jaw, extracting four teeth, as he declared I had too many for the small space reserved for them, but he filled my young empty brain with strong and breezy maxims which fanned through the miasmas of my ennui like a healthy breeze. I think he pitied me, but it was certainly not his creed to express any such thing. All weakness was taboo; he made you feel ashamed of wailing.

One of his words has remained with me for ever. This was at a later date; he found me bemoaning some news received in a letter from home. My tears were flowing like a heavy spring shower: "Wipe your eyes," said Dr. Young, "this is not going to be the last disappointment in your life."

This trite summing-up of a situation, pronounced without either smile or frown, was characteristic of the man.

Our friendship long outlasted the years when my teeth needed his attention. I to-day still treasure the memory of Dr. Young, who died only in the first year of the Great War.

He was a personal friend of both King Carol and Queen Carmen Sylva.

That an old American dentist should have brought solace to a little

seventeen-year-old princess, gives the measure of how lonely her days must have been.

The months dragged slowly on towards spring. Easter came and I wanted to go to Holy Communion according to home habits. Everything was prepared with the usual ceremony and complications adherent to my new surroundings, and off I set, with my anxious old lady-in-waiting as sole companion, to the German Protestant Church. I was not feeling well and the sadness of being for the first time alone for this blessed ceremony, and also the emotion, I suppose, proved too much for me. I fell in a dead faint on the floor before my good old Madame Grecianu was able to catch me in her arms.

Fluster, commotion, confusion,—I was brought home and laid upon my couch of refuge. Madame Grecianu, still all trembling with the fright I had caused her, rushed to the King to announce "*qu'un petit malheur s'était produit.*" The King, imagining that his dearest hopes had been frustrated, was ready to tear out his hair. He hurried to our apartment, where he found me slightly tearful but palely smiling and very much ashamed of myself, being convinced that Mamma would have highly disapproved of my fainting in public, like an early Victorian maiden in a ladylike novel.

The two Louises were fussing around me with smelling-salts and what-not, whilst pale and scared Nando was contemplating me with eyes of love. But His Majesty was relieved, his hopes had not been destroyed.

This was, however, another occasion on which Madame Grecianu dared again to express her opinion that something must be done to tear me out of the splenetic condition into which I was sinking to the detriment of my health.

But what could be done? Evidently the tea-parties were no great success; something else must be devised. But uncle and nephew were already so anchored in their everyday routine, from which every caprice or fantasy had been carefully extirpated, that it was not easy to break through the pedantic order of things so as to amuse a moping child who could not always keep up the pretence of being grown-up.

Again several wise heads were put together, and it was finally de-

cided that a visit to the fortresses which encircled Bucarest might present a form of amusement acceptable to all sides.

King Carol was exceedingly proud of this series of fortifications, elaborated according to the most advanced military conceptions of that period. The Princess was fond of things military; the Minister of War and other high army officials could be invited to take part in the entertainment and it would at the same time be an occasion for His Majesty to make a royal inspection. Certainly this was an excellent idea. Madame Grecianu nodded approval; she was also to be one of the party and with motherly understanding she would see to it that the military gentlemen did not over-fatigue her precious young charge.

Looking back on all the fuss and complications adherent to every one of King Carol's *déplacements*, be they ever so small, makes me smile a little sadly. To-day we have certainly simplified all this, we have lived through trials so great and changes so fundamental that it would appear absurd, if not absolutely sinful, to complicate life on all occasions as was then the way. Sometimes, however, incredible as it may seem, in looking back I feel like heaving a sigh of regret.

Any change in the dismal everyday programme was acceptable to me, so, in spite of the Minister of War and the several old generals who were to constitute the backbone of the party, I was as pleasurably excited as I was expected to be. No particular remembrance has, however, remained to me of this military entertainment except of how dear old Madame Grecianu, full of a mother hen's anxiety for her princess's welfare, hung on to the back of my ample "bell" skirt in case I should collapse when, in demonstration of their excellence, the different cannons of the forts were to be fired off for His Majesty's approval. I much resented this unnecessary fuss made over my person and tried to make my old lady-in-waiting understand that, being an admiral's daughter and having stood on many a deck during the firing of guns, a few fortification cannons were not going to make me faint; at which she smiled at me with that broad smile of motherly indulgence which was her sweetest characteristic.

Spring having come at last, like a timorous guest, Uncle had an even more unusual entertainment in store for his troublesome homesick niece. This was a visit to a monastery and to a convent situated amidst

lakes and swamps a little way beyond the town. To-day, when motors have brought all places easily within reach, this has become quite a short drive, but in those days of slow carriages, it was quite an excursion which had to be organized with care *und viel Ueberlegen*—German comes instinctively to my tongue when I think of dear old King Carol, as it was always in that language that we conversed together.

Uncle's conversation was always instructive, and if it was often beyond my comprehension, it was my fault, not his. He loved speaking about his adopted country. He had put all his energy, all his intelligence, political ability and first-rate German efficiency into his life's work. He was always interesting, but to one so young and under-educated as I was his somewhat pedantic dissertations occasionally seemed rather dull.

But at last we were going out into the country, beyond the confines of the town, a thing I had been craving for, but which, in spite of my pleading, had not yet been granted me, not out of unkindness but merely because their imagination did not stretch so far as to understand that a wee bit of change occasionally would have made all the difference to my cramped and incredibly dull life.

I must be forgiven for over and over again using the vague term "they," because it was in this impersonal form that the huge "vetoes" of life rose before me, restricting everything, blotting out every possibility, effacing all joy-of-life out of my days. "They" did not want it, "They" could not understand, "They" did not find this or that in keeping with a princess's dignity, "They" were always in eternal opposition to my every desire and aspiration, and as "They" had no special form or colour or face, "They" were difficult to fight, persuade or overcome. . . . "They, They, They" terrorized my poor little life.

Well, this vague "They" did not comprehend my natural desire to get into touch with the real "feel" of the country, with its people, its soil, its habits, its history. From the very first I sensed that behind the deadly ennui of the life I was condemned to live, there was something else, something larger, more real, that might even be tinged with some of that poetry I had imagined I should find in this far land. It lay no doubt somewhere beyond the daily round, beyond the palace which

stifled me, beyond the town which held me prisoner, beyond the narrow horizon which hemmed me in. It was like a big heart beating somewhere outside, waiting for me, a heart that would one day understand me, would one day beat also for me. And now, suddenly, a door was being opened; I was to be allowed a peep into the country. Uncle did not in the least realize that, with this meagre little promenade, he was sowing the first real seed of love for Roumania in my heart.

In Bucarest I had simply found a town inferior to the towns I had known, a city without any special character and with no definite face, a rather poor imitation of Occidental towns. I did not know in those days that it was a gay, a happy, even a frivolous town. No fun or gaiety was ever allowed to penetrate the palace walls; but the craving for the country lay within me; for open spaces, for green forests, fields and meadows, for sky, river and flowers, and for long roads that would lead away from streets—even towards the sea perhaps, towards the deep blue sea.

I look back to that excursion to Cernica and Paserea as to a day of initiation, the initiation into the spirit of the country, to the mystery and poetry of those sanctuaries scattered far and wide amongst the green sweet places of the land. Ever since that day, a steady love grew up in my heart for the convents and monasteries of Roumania, for their beauty, calm and peace, for their delicious old-world charm, for their strong link in the chain of the past.

To add to the enchantment of this first touch with the "outside" we were to drive in a carriage drawn by four enchanting Norwegian ponies. Thick-set, stalwart little animals, cream-coloured with immensely broad necks, rendered broader still by high-hogged manes. Their rounded haunches had the colour of unripe apricots and a quaint dark line ran the whole length of their backs from their foreheads to the utmost tip of their long-flowing tails.

These sturdy little horses filled my heart with almost aching delight; I would throw my arms round their broad necks, bury my face against them, breathing in the odour of their skin which reminded me of Tommy, of Ruby, of Viceroy and of all the horses that had played such a large part in my childhood. Precious little apricot-coloured creatures, you never realized the ecstasy you were in those days to my lonely uprooted heart. You were a link with the past, nor were you

wise, critical or educational, and the trot-trot of your sixteen feet made a joyful sound on the hard alien roads so far from home.

Cernica : a monastery built in the middle of vast swamps all a-flower with wild yellow irises. A curious, rather unsafe-looking wooden bridge, very long, flat, half-rotting away, which swayed beneath the feet of the four Norwegian ponies, a bridge which ran over into a narrow road between the swamps leading towards a little colony of white cottages grouped round an old church. A lonely-looking place over which lay a strange stillness full of melancholy charm; it had something world-forgotten about it, something forlorn, almost decaying.

The church was reached by driving under an ancient belfry set in the enormously thick outer walls of a large enclosed court-yard, roughly paved with round cobbles. The bells were ringing for all they were worth, making a great ado, and when with a clatter of horses' hoofs we drove up before the church door, a dark river of monks came pouring out to meet us, a procession of bearded men, sable-clothed and soft-footed, looking huge in their long dark cassocks; their high head-dress and dense black veils adding to their height; their gestures were humble and they kept their eyes turned to the ground. The Abbot, or Staritz, bent low before the King, offering him Cross and Bible to kiss, and then ushered us into the church whilst the dark brethren lifted up their voices in a queer wailing chant. A *Te Deum* was sung, the monks' voices were untrained, inharmonious, but the monotonous sing-song, although not particularly pleasing to the ear, added in a way to the atmosphere of the place.

I loved the mellowness of the shady sanctuary, its dim light, its tapers and swaying silver lamps, its half-effaced frescoes; there was a certain poetry about it, something primitive, "Eastern." It was a picture in half-tones, it took hold of my imagination, it touched some chord within me, awoke the artist slumbering in my soul. There was poetry also in the little white habitations where the monks lived, tiny little houses with thatched or shingled roofs, their small gardens running down towards the reed-filled swamp; and everywhere yellow irises, sun-coloured and slim, giving colour to the water, greatly adding to the simple charm of the place. One old monk offered me a

humble nosegay of sweet-scented cottage flowers, pinks, pansies, sweet basil, and little tufts of verbenas; for roses it was still too early in the season. The old man's beard was frosted silver and his eyes had the dim colour of the lake which bordered his modest enclosure. I looked longingly over this wide, somewhat melancholy water-world; great peace lay over this lonely place, peace and deep, dreamy but very simple beauty which somehow my soul understood. For the first time since I had come to my new home, something awoke within me, something began to stir, something like a faint hope. It was like a wee, hardly discernible voice, sounding I knew not whence, promising that one day . . . one day perhaps, there would be some link, some understanding between me and this alien land. Some day, if only "They" would let me grope my way towards it, let me feel, touch, see, discover, understand; but to make this possible "They" must not shackle me with over-heavy chains.

But looking back upon my life, absurd as it may sound, that visit to Cernica was the first awakening of that deep love and understanding which gradually grew up between me and Roumania; therefore I cannot help looking upon that unimportant little drive into the swamps as a date which counts in my life.

From Cernica we went to Pasera. Paserea was a convent. The nuns were just as pleased to see us as the monks had been. But they were fussier, talked more, exclaimed, crossed themselves at every word they or Uncle said, ran hither and thither, behaved in fact rather as a flock of geese suddenly disturbed.

Here too there were innumerable small houses clustering round a central church. There was another Te Deum and then we were ushered into a large, low, carpet-hung room which smelt mustily of old apples and cold wood-smoke, and here we were given sticky jam on small glass plates and glasses of not quite clear water which Uncle told me not to drink. But I liked the sticky jam. The nuns were voluble in their praise of me; they hugged and kissed me and kept throwing up their hands to the heavens, calling down a thousand blessings upon my head.

Of course I could not understand a word of what they said, but I understood that I was a thousand times welcome, and this feeling was good.

After having been sufficiently blessed we drove home. The hoofs of the Norwegian ponies clattered along the endless roads, raising clouds of dust. We passed small villages composed of tiny houses like those we used to draw as children, impossibly delightful little houses with shaggy maize-covered roofs, which I always imagined could only exist in fairy-stories.

Keenly alive to each detail I absorbed every picture; every sight was a fresh joy. The scantily clad, large-eyed children on such familiar terms with the curly-haired pigs which seemed to be everywhere; the respectful, dignified peasants who one and all lifted their heavy fur caps as we drove by; the long files of carts drawn by stone-grey oxen plodding patiently along, they, too, raising clouds of dust. The curious old stone crosses leaning like tired watchers beside the wells, of which the long poles eternally pointed towards the skies, characteristic silhouettes of the Roumanian landscape. And above all the gipsies; my husband and I shared the same irresistible attraction to the gipsies. Ragged, unkempt, filthy, nevertheless there was a peculiar spell about them, something mysterious, imponderable. Dark-skinned, stealthy, thievish but incredibly picturesque, they moved in hordes followed by their over-filled, creaking carts, quaintly spiked by tent-poles between which wild-eyed, tousle-headed children peeped out like little savages. Like little savages also they would run after you, hands extended, clamouring for pennies, turning cartwheels, persistent, intrusive, not to be shaken off, a sore trial but withal uncannily attractive so that you could not take your eyes off them. Such incredible old hags, witches out of forgotten legend, the grey strands of their hair hanging about their faces, their heads wound turban-wise with bright coloured cloths. The young men upright with long dark curls falling to their shoulders carrying bright copper vessels on their backs. Their eyes were smouldering, hot, suspicious, and the young girls striding proudly beside them might have been beggared Indian queens.

A wandering people eternally on the move, as though some inexplicable unrest were driving them from land to land; from place to place. Thieves and musicians, nomads, full of secret mystery which one longed to unravel; ever again we fell under their charm.

All this I saw and my eyes opened wide, the artist within me deeply

rejoiced. Yes, this was Roumania, the land of the Rising Sun. These endless roads, this dust, these peasants, these villages, these files of carts, those long-poled wells painted against the enormous sky, all those fields, that wide, wide view over the plain. . . . Roumania. . . .

Finally the day came for moving to Sinaia, that day which, according to Uncle's code, could never be changed, was not to be changed this year either, for the sake of a moping young woman who was carrying within her the hope of the country.

But the slow calendar did at last reach the blessed day of migration and the King and court were transferred from plain to mountain. O blessed day!

Like a captive whose chains are suddenly taken off, the joy of being in the country was almost unbearably great. The keen fresh air, the giant trees, the mountain background, and above all those marvellous meadows, green, luscious, starred by a thousand flowers, and all the flowers larger and more deeply coloured than anywhere else.

Sinaia is indeed a beautiful place, now I have got accustomed to its beauty; but that first time I saw it, it came to me somewhat in the form of a revelation; after the hot dusty ugliness of Bucarest it was release, rapture, enchantment.

For this year we were still Uncle's guests, but farther up, on the very edge of the forest, a little house was being got ready for us, a sort of glorified Swiss cottage which was called the "Foişor." Nando and I greatly rejoiced at the thought of having our own house. Castel Peleş, Uncle's summer castle, was a grand abode, but too overpowering for the country; like the Bucarest palace, Castel Peleş had about it the quality of a cage. In his love for *Altdeutsche*, the style so dear to the country of his birth, King Carol had over-decorated his royal residence, had put in gloomy stained-glass windows which shut Nature out; everything was heavily carved, heavily draped, heavily carpeted. There were some splendid old pictures, but the rooms and corridors were so dark that one could hardly see them, and what was really good in the way of furniture was drowned in an oppressive "too much" which made you almost giddy.

The general effect was rich, dignified, impressive, but the sombre

papers, the untransparent glass, the gloomy hangings were not conducive to cheerfulness. As at Bucarest I could not feel at home in such heavy rooms; besides, everything seemed to have been planned to shut out the sky, the sun.

Uncle had no idea of the meaning of country life; he brought his town atmosphere with him to Sinaia; he brought his court, his politics, his military preoccupations, his audiences, his weighty discourses. But for all his solemn way of living this was a vast improvement upon Bucarest. Beyond the heavy doors, the painted windows, the dense curtains, lay the forest, the mountains, the meadows and the laughing little streams. This was not freedom, but the air that I drew into my lungs was like a draught of cold water; there was no dust, no noise, no tramways, no streets, and the fields were full of flowers.

Nando and I loved the flowers. Nando became the same Nando I had known at Coburg and Sigmaringen when I got him amongst the flowers; then he became young again, he could laugh and enjoy himself and had no more that painfully anxious look. Yes, how he loved flowers; this was a tremendous link between us, a bridge by which we could always reach each other amidst things that I did not understand.

To-day I can still conjure up before me the way he would hold flowers in his beautifully aristocratic hands; he had a special way of holding them, as though he did not want to hurt them. All through the years, the good and the bad years, he has brought me flowers with exactly that same gesture, handling them so tenderly, and each time he came to me thus, be it with a simple snowdrop or a precious orchid, it was like that first time at Munich when so shyly he brought me that bunch of roses, holding them almost reverently as though to do them no harm. . . .

But in the evening he became Uncle's obedient nephew again and played billiards with him every single day, and I was supposed to find my amusement in watching their game whilst they asphyxiated me with the fumes of their heavy cigars.

Luckily at Sinaia the household took their meals with us, which was a change from the oppressive lunches and suppers at Bucarest where we had always been three, and foremost amongst the household was General Vladescu, my special friend with the long white moustache and mischievous eyes. General Vladescu was always able to

make me laugh, though laughter in those days was dangerously near tears.

How I hated the click of those heavy billiard balls!

But now I am coming to a happy hour. So happy that to-day I still catch my breath merely at the thought of it.

Ducky was arriving. Ducky, my sister, my pal, my companion, my chum—Mamma was sending her to me. Mamma would be coming later for the great event, but Mamma had understood that I must not be allowed to mope too long, so she was sending on Ducky ahead.

As children we had always scoffed at the idea that there could be tears of joy, but on this day of Ducky's arrival I understood the meaning of tears of joy.

We were to meet Ducky at Predeal, then the frontier. Nando and I were to drive out with the four Norwegian ponies, quite an excursion, and on the way home we would stop at a wee little monastery perched amongst the fir trees, just off the road, and there we would drink our tea.

This was exactly the right way to receive Ducky. Ducky would understand the charm of the thick-necked, cream-coloured ponies, understand the joy they were in my life. She would love the little old monastery and the mountains and especially the gorgeous meadows full of flowers.

And it all went off as it should; the train was punctual and the joy of meeting was such that it was akin to pain. Nando laughed his shy little laugh and he too was pleased to see Ducky, Nando was not jealous of our love for each other, he was happy to have a sister. And as planned we drank our tea under the giant fir trees by the quaint little monastery with its toy-like church, whilst a trio of hoary monks, hands tucked into their wide sleeves, looked on at our little feasts. They were primitive old recluses; they had not many words, but they gave atmosphere to the first picture Ducky was to have of the country which had become mine. . . .

The coming of Ducky put new life into my existence; even bore-some things became interesting and everything was worth while. Ducky could see things from the same angle as I, she understood what was unbearable, what was funny, what was pathetic; we were still ignorant

little fools, our judgment was not worth much, but blood is thicker than water and there are certain things and their why and wherefore which only a sister or a brother, those who have been brought up with you, can understand.

Even the billiards did not matter any more; Ducky was there to tell me about home, to share things with me, so that even the clicking of those dreadful ivory balls had quite another sound. And Mamma had sent me all sorts of little presents, and every one of Ducky's words was a link with the past.

CHAPTER XV

CAROL IS BORN

SUMMER slipped gradually over into autumn, the trees became an astonishing glory of rust, amber and gold, and in the first days of October Mamma came, bringing Sandra and Baby Bee.

Uncle was tremendously polite to Mamma, but it was not long before their two strong wills clashed. There was a Russian autocracy about Mamma which Uncle occasionally resented. Mamma was practical, high-handed, accustomed to manage and to rule; she came into a house where there was no hostess and in which a family event was soon expected; this gave rise to a certain amount of differences of opinions. Mamma and Uncle did not see eye to eye about doctors, nurses, and many other things. Mamma had had five children and knew all about it, but Uncle was accustomed to mix up politics with his daily bread. He saw deep problems in each smallest event, all things were to him weighty, full of pitfalls, he treated the smallest happenings as though they were insurmountable difficulties. Mamma had an imperial way of sweeping obstacles aside, quite indifferent to the opinion of others and not in the least comprehending with what care, ceremony and ponderation Uncle was surrounding the coming event. Even small events were magnified by this careful, judicious, prudent king, and the arrival of what might be the long-expected heir was no small event indeed!

Conflicts, discussions; irony on Mamma's side, irritation on Uncle's, and between the two stood my poor Nando on tenterhooks.

I, the apple of contention, understood little about these controversies, and had my face anxiously turned towards the trial before which I stood; Mamma's cheery smile was like an anchor to which I clung.

It was only afterwards that Nando related to me the many episodes preceding the great event, and I understood the tragic comedy of the situation in which the poor young husband had been torn hither and thither between the conflicting forces, his common sense on Mamma's

side, his loyalty on Uncle's, as nothing would ever make Mamma admit that Uncle need mix up politics with doctors, wet-nurses, dates, names, hours of the day and even rooms.

In later years, after my third child, I took the managing of things into my own hands; it was more peaceful and little by little I had learnt to understand and respect Uncle's point of view. He had the right to be master in his own house. His rule was hard, so hard that it made a suffering instead of a joy out of youth; he had no comprehension for the young, all was iron duty. But it was a good school, it hardened your moral muscles, and if you were made of strong enough stuff not to be broken, it put iron into your soul, preparing you for the vicissitudes, trials and renunciations of life. It also taught you patience. But it had one drawback; having been just *too* hard, it made you vow within your heart not to inflict the same suffering upon your own followers, and thereby inclined you to too great leniency. . . .

The pendulum always swings back.

Grandmamma Queen in England, a mighty lady in her day, put an end to some of the controversies by sending an English doctor to assist her granddaughter in her trial.

"We want to be on the safe side," said Grandmamma, "so near the East you know . . . most uncertain. . . ."

In those days old Queen Victoria had her say everywhere and in everything, it was not in vain that she had ruled so long, and even Uncle bowed down before her might: "The Queen of England, Missy's Grandmother . . ." so Uncle submitted and the English doctor came, and on Sunday the 15th of October at one in the morning my first child was born, the heir so impatiently awaited, and they called him Carol after his great-uncle, and the rejoicing throughout the country was great. Curiously enough Carol was born on exactly the same date that twenty years before Mamma had given birth to Alfred, also her first-born.

There I lay in the great *Altdeutsch* bed exhausted, shaken, feeling very small, very helpless and dangerously near tears. What was this fearful battle I had been through? What did all that pain mean? But it was an astonishing moment of bliss when the living, flannel-swaddled bundle was laid in my arms. Was this really my child? And

Mamma was there, bending over me and the expression of her dear round face reminded me of that last night at home before I set out for life. . . . And Nando, how pale he was! And Uncle, who came later, said that now I was like a soldier having been through fire.

But that curiously trapped feeling was still with me. All these events had happened outside myself, there were terrible forces at work quite beyond my control, I was continually being overruled, taken by surprise. Was Nature an enemy? Were human beings all in league with each other to keep me in the dark? And that pain, that dreadful pain?

"She had a very easy time," assured round little Doctor Playfair with a beaming face.

"An easy time—do they call that easy?" and I felt like turning my face to the wall, unwilling to take up a life again in which such pain could exist.

Mamma, however, was exactly the right person for cheering up a new mother: "Listen to the cannon," she said; "think of how delighted the people will be when they hear the hundred and one salutes." Faintly I heard the voice of the cannon and faintly I smiled. What the people felt was a matter of indifference to me; I had not yet discovered my people, they had been carefully kept from me. In those days I was certainly not *à la hauteur* of the event which had just happened; I had no idea that at this hour I was a very important person who had brought about a very important event.

Later, when I had become a responsible human being and had, so to say, taken my fate into my own hands, those hours when, the battle over, I lay with the new little human soul clasped in my arms, listening to the royal salute, became hours of deep, conscious, almost sacred emotion. I felt that, at these hours, my country was listening with me, watching with me; I felt the heart of my people beating in mine, and mine in theirs. Yes, I have had in my time those joys. Little by little I had become a conscious patriot, a willing part of the great machine, and that feeling of love and unity with my people was for me a holy feeling which rendered effort, sacrifice, abnegation worth while. I was one in the great plan of things, a necessary entity, and, being as I am, the consciousness of this fact meant much to me. I was fundamentally rash, impulsive, uncalculating, but the law was within me, the law of equity, the law of just common sense.

But this came gradually, by living, after many struggles and much suffering and also, alas! many revolts, for I was not a tame, passive being; I had to find out things for myself.

But at this first birth Mamma was a precious necessity. I could hardly bear her to leave the room; she was so safe, so capable, and she was home; the home I had lost.

Unfortunately, my sisters were gone! Mamma had meant them to leave before the event. There had been very comic scenes with Baby Bee. Baby Bee had always been a child of exceptional intelligence. Being the youngest, Mamma guarded and adored her with special fervour, but for all that Baby Bee was a forerunner of the youth of to-day. In spite of all Mamma's love and care, Baby Bee generally outwitted her anxious parent and had most things her own way.

Mamma, true to her principles, did not wish her youngest offspring to know that a family event was expected. How she could ever delude herself with the hope that the keen-eyed child did not notice everything that was going on is incomprehensible.

So as to keep the unruly child out of harm's way, every sort of amusement was arranged for her; amongst others a pony had been procured upon which she was allowed to ride about to her heart's content. It was cheerful General Vladescu who was chosen to be her companion, and she very much perturbed this kindly gentleman by urging her little horse up the stone steps of the castle terraces. Uncle used to witness these pranks from his windows; unaccustomed to children, he was kept in continual alarm. But the austere sovereign took a great fancy to this amusing and intelligent younger sister of mine. They became firm friends; he would take her for long walks in the forest, during which she gave him many a fright by climbing about in the most perilous places she could discover. Uncle used to hang on to the end of her short skirts so as to suppress her too great energies.

But the comic thing was that Baby Bee immediately spotted that something unusual was going on in the house and, in spite of the many enticements invented so as to lure her beyond the castle gates, it was each time a struggle to get her to go out. If some event of interest were to take place within, she certainly had no intention of missing it.

The baby was supposed to appear round about the 18th of October,

so it had been decided that my sisters should leave on the 15th at mid-day. But at one o'clock that Sunday morning "the lovely new-coming little Crown Prince" put in his appearance, thus frustrating Mamma's carefully laid plots and playing into the hands of the child who was to have been kept in ignorance of what was going on!

Sister Baby was triumphant, but being in bed I did not witness the scenes which took place around the tiny cradle before my sisters were with many tears hurried away, none except Ducky having been allowed to see me.

Mamma remained some time longer at Sinaia, which was an enormous joy. She would read to me by the hour but also inquired much into my life and impressions. She was somewhat perturbed when she realized how exceedingly, abnormally dull was the life I was expected to lead. To her, as to me, it seemed unnecessary to mix up politics in everyday events, thereby complicating all things so exceedingly.

Mamma received many diplomats—Bülow, Gudehowski, Fonton, Sir Charles Hardinge; but Bülow was the one she liked best and he would come to her what we children considered much too often, because we disliked and mistrusted him, much to Mamma's indignation. "You are much too young to have any opinions," declared our parent; no doubt she was right, nevertheless we had the feeling that he was sneaky and not to be trusted. Children often have these instinctive dislikes.

Carol's christening took place with much ceremony on the 29th of October, my eighteenth birthday. I remember Mamma putting on all her magnificent pearls for the occasion. Orthodox christenings generally take place as soon as possible after the child's birth, the child having to be entirely immersed; it is easier done when they are quite small; mothers, according to tradition, never assist at the christening of their children, but if well enough receive congratulations after the ceremony is over. This was done in my case.

Decked out in a lovely tea-gown, all satin and lace, which Mamma had given me for the occasion, I was installed upon a couch in my room. My nurse and the two Louises fussed around me so that I should look my very best. The ceremony over, the little Christian was brought me

and laid in my arms, and it was thus that my future subjects came to congratulate me and express their joy over the gift I had made to the country.

Many came: old Ministers and generals, important wives of important functionaries, and those of the court, also the servants. I felt proud and a little trembling, with my precious babe clasped in my arms, rather as though I had suddenly been given a living doll to play with, because this was not only Carol's christening but my eighteenth birthday.

From the very first, Carol was a big, healthy and exceedingly amiable baby; his coming made of course a great difference in my life; quite new horizons opened before me. I had now a mighty interest around which all my hopes and energies could centre.

Yes, God had been kind; He had allowed me at the very outset to satisfy the dearest desire of my people.

It were impossible to relate all my life, year by year; ten volumes would not suffice for all I remember of pain and joy, for life is a slow proceeding and many events go to the building up of a soul, of a character.

Looking back, the seasons of my youth pass before me like pictures strung together, some full of hope and glamour, some dark with those stormy despairs peculiar to the young.

The central figure of our world was King Carol, that strong, quiet man, a master indeed, dominating all those dependent upon him; a man who planned and foresaw, who, having overcome his passions and crushed every personal desire, expected the same of others; a man who had forgotten that he had ever been young and who therefore had but scant understanding for those who, mere human beings, wanted to live and be glad.

I remember once, how after one of our conflicts (there were many, alas!) I had written him a letter full of revolt, begging him to remember that if my youth were stolen from me, nothing and no one could ever give me back the best years of my life. His answer had been short and to the point: "Only the frivolous consider youth the best years of life."

Such was *der Onkel*, and although in later years we became firm

friends, even associates, from the very first, because of my character and education, we were destined to clash. My outward appearance was that of a tame little maiden with blue eyes and fair hair, but strong blood ran in my veins and I possessed a great instinct of self-preservation. Subconsciously I knew that I could not exist as a slave, that if I allowed my will to be broken I should never live to be any real good to the country which had become my destiny. From the very first it had to be give and take. For years we had to submit to what Uncle considered just demands upon our obedience, but which to us appeared to be tyranny, we had to tremble before his iron will; power was in his hands, we could but submit. Nevertheless, within possible limits, I remained unconquered and cut through my own way in spite of every defence and restriction.

Of course I made no end of mistakes, often behaved foolishly and exaggerated my troubles. All beginners of life set out with the idea that happiness is their special right, the chief if not the only aim of existence, and they want to reach it in their own way; anyone or anything opposing this rush towards that luminous goal, becomes the enemy, the one to be overcome.

Uncle and I were fond of each other, but for all that we were opponents. His one object was to fit me into his scheme of things according to his conception of order and justice, while mine was to remain a free agent, to be my own master, to develop on my own lines a being with thoughts of her own, a life of her own.

I immensely admire German thoroughness; the mass result of German education is useful, but the spirit of absolute obedience crushing every individuality I personally could never submit to. I was too bubbling-full of life and imagination to follow a narrow, dull, uninspiring track so close behind the old king that his shadow blotted out the sun. I was ready to learn, but I also wanted to understand, to hold up my head and face life; I felt that I should never be able to give my best if treated as a prisoner, if my every movement and impulse were controlled, criticized and cut down to shape.

Having been intensely happy in my old home I wanted to bring some of that happiness into the new one. Every element for happiness was there—a young, loving husband, a beautiful and interesting country ready to take the young princess up into its heart, wide scope, every

worldly advantage and a large horizon spreading out before us. And yet, all this was to be cramped, blighted, darkened by that curious faculty Uncle had of magnifying the importance of every act, every word, every meeting or parting, of every innovation. We were entirely hemmed in, controlled, overruled. We were never allowed to choose those who were to serve us, nor even in later years was it permitted that we should select those who were to bring up our children. There was fuss and endless discussion even over the most humble gymnastic-master and it seemed such a weighty affair to find a German who could give German lessons to our son that for years he was not taught to speak his father's language. We were never consulted, or if we were, only *pro forma*, and such pressure was laid upon us that we could but agree to the choice already made beforehand. With a strange want of understanding, we were thus more than once obliged to accept in our household people entirely antagonistic to us, with whom it was a torment to live and who carried within them the seed of future disaster. These people were entirely beholden to Uncle and played in our household the part of informers, not to use a stronger expression; a household in which such species are rampant cannot, to put it mildly, be a comfortable household. Often I was unaware of the part these people were playing and trusted them, treated them as though they were loyal, was outspoken, unguarded, guileless, as it was quite beyond my simple conceptions that there could be people, seemingly pleasant, who betrayed you behind your back. One is not prepared for Iagos in one's own life. Little by little, however, I discovered that all sorts of humans "lived under the sun" and the discovery was distinctly unpleasant, but it did not shatter my belief in humanity. One faithful man outweighs a dozen traitors, and I have met with lifelong fidelities and towards these I look back with immense gratitude, whilst the others—they are best forgotten.

The birth of our second child, Elisabetha, came to pass before Carol was a year old, and it was round about this date that Queen Carmen Sylva returned to live amongst us and our daughter was given her name.

Carmen Sylva was also destined to play a great part in my life.

Well do I remember her arrival at Sinaia and how, after a great

reception at the station, we all flocked to the monastery church for a solemn Te Deum. The Queen had not forgotten that she had been exiled for two years; Carmen Sylva never forgot. I remember with what a superbly royal gesture she mounted the steps of her high chair, the Queen's chair, opposite the King's. She was once more taking possession of it. She did this with tragic dignity; no one could ignore the tragedy of it, nor the tragedy which looked out from her deep-set eyes as she gazed down upon all those who had crowded to meet her and to bid her welcome home. What may have been her thoughts? How many of those, all smiles to-day, had kept faith whilst she was far away? Popularity is a treacherous thing, and the love of a people for its sovereigns is swayed by many winds; few resist howling with the wolves.

I could not keep my eyes off the Queen, she fascinated me as she had fascinated me the first time we had met. She was so entirely different from anyone else; romance clung to her, though to-day she was no more a white-clad invalid, painting strange flowers in her bed, surrounded by a weird company of poor relations, who had come to the lonely forest dwelling to be healed. To-day she stood upright and was very much alive; her movements were swift, energetic, with something uncompromising almost defiant about them. Her attire was entirely unbecoming, for Carmen Sylva was without taste, but a strange force emanated from her, some hypnotism not easy to define.

My young eyes watched her anxiously; she had come to add a fourth to the strange trio we had been for over a year and a half, and she was certainly no negligible quantity; did her coming bode good or ill? Would she be a mother to me? Would she help me along my way? I was as ready as ever to adore, to admire; the fascination still held, but there was something quite uncompromising about her tread which made my heart beat uncomfortably. All through the years I knew her she had the habit of pacing her chamber like some great captive creature in a cage. If I can so express it, her tread was unresigned, there was a quality of revolt about it. Up and down, up and down, with a movement which swept you along with her, irresistibly if you would or not, you found yourself pacing beside her, listening to the many things she had to say whilst she held you under the charm of her golden voice. Ever was I more charmed by her voice than by the things she said, but

her step had in it a restlessness almost as expressive as her voice—there was no peace in it and no repose.

Though she sang of forest, mountain, sea and river, she very seldom left the house, considering it to be waste of time, and this was no doubt partly the reason why she so continually paced her chamber with that restless tread.

Certainly with the advent of Carmen Sylva my life became fuller and more exciting. Her personality was as great as King Carol's; they were direct opposites, ice and fire, but their manners were perfect and they were grand associates for the one and same cause.

Although she was so impulsive, so forceful, Uncle was very much the master. He admired his poet wife, was proud of her, but was disinclined to allow her imagination full sway, fearing it might lead her and him into difficulties, which it occasionally did, in spite of all his watchful authority.

"Aunty," as we called her, needed an audience; she had so much to say and said it so beautifully that she naturally wanted people about her who would listen and admire; she was therefore continually surrounded by an ecstatic circle of ladies hanging on her every word, and these were supplemented by artists, poets, musicians. Many interesting people came to Aunty, but there were also those who were merely insipid echoes, forming a chorus; these were irritating and occasionally gave to her salon a touch of the absurd.

Mamma had intended to be with me also for my second child's birth; but Elisabetha was in a hurry and appeared on October the 11th, 1894, before Mamma had time to arrive, so it was Aunt Elisabeth and a Roumanian doctor who were with me during my trial. Later, Dr. Cantacuzène and I became staunch friends, but in those days he was a stranger to me and I looked at him with eyes filled with fear. At this period my life appeared to be a series of perplexing and uncomfortable events. I had no real identity; people seemed to dispose of me according to their will and Nature laid incomprehensible traps. There were too many mysteries and secrets, nor dared I delve too deeply down into what was going on for fear of discovering unbearable facts.

Aunty, overcome by the poignant memories of her own maternity and of her many frustrated hopes, was much agitated and moved by

this family event, and kept exhorting me to realize that this was the most wonderful, glorious, blissful hour of my life. Torn to pieces by excruciating pain I could in nowise rise to the height of her enthusiasm and wept with longing for my mother, who only appeared on the scene a few days later. Her dear face and sober ways were like a safe haven after having been tossed on alien seas. I clung to her, needing the security of her quiet masterfulness, which brought everything back to the normal. Though both Mamma and Auntie had been brought up in an epoch when politeness was the supreme idol of the well-born, although they were both deeply educated and cultivated, they represented, so to say, two schools: the realistic and the romantic; they had vastly different conceptions of life, and although they never departed from their attitude of extreme amiability towards each other, I do not think they had much in common.

Auntie had the habit of discoursing unrestrainedly upon every subject, her poetic mind gilded every topic, she set herself no boundaries of speech; her public was a matter of indifference to her, everything could be said to anyone at any hour, in any place. She could be very amusing and yet she lacked humour, which my mother possessed in the highest degree. Looking back upon all this I realize how entertaining it must have been to listen to them, but in those days I was not yet ripe enough to be able to follow the humour of the situation though I instinctively felt a certain hostility beneath their polite conversation. Besides, Mamma never forgot that a young mother needed rest, but Auntie, who considered herself at home in my house, resented being reminded of the fact, which made the air somewhat electric; those two personalities together were too large for a sick-room.

Every day at a certain hour, Uncle came to see me as I lay with my new treasure clasped in my arms. He showed me great kindness and was much interested in his great-niece who was an adorable, wise-eyed, solemn-faced baby, but his topics of conversation were heavy and I have kept a certain memory of fatigue when looking back upon that second confinement. Everybody was being kind, attentive, but there was a want of ease and quiet about it all which strained my nerves; I felt different currents circling around me and being in bed put me at a disadvantage, I was, so to say, at the mercy of those who thought they had a right to mix up in my very young and newly established household.

A great assistance to me during this time was my sister Sandra, then sixteen, but of a helpful, practical turn of mind. She kept watch for me and dearly loved our little Carol, playing a mother's part to him whilst I was laid up. All through life I have had a horror of those periods when I was set aside by sickness or confinement, when I had to give up, let others rule my house, dispose for me ; it nearly always ended in some sort of trouble. Being marvellously strong I was seldom laid up, but when it did happen to me I could not help looking upon it as a humiliation, a downfall ; you were delivered over into the hands of others, were at their mercy. Invalids are never told the truth ; once in a sick-bed you are beyond the pale, you are humoured, others rule for you, think for you, you are vanquished. I always hated being dependent, and that horizontal position, contrasting with the man vertically standing on his feet, bending over you, was a defeat in itself, a lessening of your personality, an admitted inferiority. I never liked giving my will over into other hands, never knowing where this surrender would end. If I had lived in an older-established country, I should have felt this less acutely, but in a new country one's every faculty is always needed all the time. Things do not run smoothly of themselves. It is continual effort only which keeps the ball rolling.

The quiet weeks I had hoped for with Mamma after my confinement, were, alas ! to be denied me as she had suddenly to leave for the Crimea where her brother, Emperor Alexander III (Uncle Sasha), lay dying in his palace of Livadia. An Imperial yacht came to fetch her at Constantza. It was hard to see her go, but she had the consolation of finding her brother still alive. He died a few days later.

Luckily I was much attached to my Russian nurse, Gunst, who had been with me during Carol's birth. She was clever and amusing, besides being a first-rate nurse.

My sister Sandra remained with me, which meant much to me as I was tired and my nerves were somewhat on edge ; the return of Queen Elisabeth had been a stirring event at a moment when I was not best fitted to endure the strain of violent emotions. Besides, Aunty had her own rather queer ideas about nurses and children and considered that I needed teaching and leading ; she had also to win back her lost authority and all these different excitements were not conducive to repose.

I remember an amusing scene when sister Sandra stood up manfully



QUEEN VICTORIA AT COBURG WITH HER DAUGHTER THE KAISERIN AUGUSTE VICTORIA; AND HER THREE
SONS: ALBERT EDWARD, ALFRED (MY FATHER) AND ARTHUR, DUKE OF CONNAUGHT



Nicky
Shirley
1896

THE EMPEROR NICHOLAS II IN 1896



ALIX—THE EMPRESS ALEXANDRA

facing Uncle, declaring that I needed a holiday and that he must give me permission to go to Coburg for Christmas, where my father was now reigning duke. Uncle protested, saying that, as Auntie had just returned, this would make people talk, they would imagine that we did not get on well together; it was essential that we should appear both of us at Bucarest; there could be no parting just now. I dared not plead for myself, but Sandra had the courage of the innocent and spoke out all she felt: "But it is just a rest from all of you that she needs," she exclaimed, "or her nerves will go to pieces!" Uncle's feelings can well be imagined, but I think he realized that "truth cometh from the lips of children and fools," so he finally gave way but on condition that I went first to Bucarest when the court moved from Sinaia, and that the children should remain with them whilst we were abroad.

Our whole youth was torn and tortured by cruel debates each time we wanted to move or travel, and the children were the chief apple of contention. Uncle and Aunt wished us to understand that the children were national property, they also wished to bring them up according to their ideas and to surround them with people chosen by themselves. This of course gave endless trouble, as we parents naturally claimed our rights. All this is ancient history, but the despair of it remains as an echo of something that the heart cannot forget. It was very difficult to stand.

But in spite of Uncle's iron rule, there were occasions when he had to let us go abroad, such as to assist at marriages, funerals, coronations, etc. No valid excuse could be found to prevent these outings, which came to our secluded lives as a window suddenly opened in an airless room.

Both Ducky and Sandra followed my example; they too married at the early age of seventeen.

Ducky had become exceedingly handsome; she was tall, dark, with rather tragic grey eyes, and her character was firm and ripe for her age.

Grandmamma Queen, for sentimental reasons, ardently desired that she should marry our first cousin, the young Grand Duke of Hesse, son of her second daughter, Alice, who had died when he was a boy. Now his father was also dead and it was old Queen Victoria who mothered these grandchildren. The young Grand Duke was a pleasant,

clever young man and a desirable *parti*. According to worldly appreciations this was a match which promised every hope of happiness. Our mother, always against marriages between first cousins, would have liked to oppose it, but in this case she was overruled by strong family feeling.

A tremendous gathering of important royalties came together for this occasion, including the Empress Frederick, the Kaiser, the Tsarevitch (later Nicolas II) and many other members of the Russian, English and German royal families, presided over by Grandmamma Queen in person, who shed her sober glory over the festivities.

This was of course one of the occasions when King Carol had to allow us to go abroad.

It was during this family gathering at Coburg, on the 20th of April, 1894, that Nicky, the future Tsar, became engaged to the Grand Duke of Hesse's youngest sister Alice, who later took the name of Alexandra when passing over to the Orthodox Church.

I saw very little of my beloved companion Ducky during these days of feverish excitement, nor had we much time to talk, but it was with a pang that we both realized that our ways were parting more and more.

In spite of Grandmamma's blessing and of the brilliant auspices under which this marriage took place, it was not destined to be a happy one and was dissolved by mutual consent in 1901.

On the same date, April the 20th, two years later, Sandra married Prince Ernest of Hohenlohe-Langenburg, and that same year, 1896, in the summer, we went to Moscow for the Coronation of Nicolas and Alexandra. The stupendous magnificence of these festivities is worth recording and I shall try therefore to describe them as I saw them with the eyes of a very young woman of twenty to whom it seemed, after the sober abnegation of King Carol's court, like suddenly stepping from the dark into dazzling sunshine.

CHAPTER XVI

CORONATION OF NICOLAS II OF RUSSIA

THE glamour of those Coronation festivities is not easy to describe and there seems more than a lifetime between then and to-day when the glory of the Tsars is a thing of the past and the tragedy of Red Russia a ghastly reality and a danger to the whole of the civilized world. It is difficult to conceive that those three glittering weeks spent in Moscow were not a dream or visions imagined by a lover of fairy-tales. Yet they were real enough, and I lived them with all the ardour of my twenty years, and their enchantment was all the greater because of the exceeding austerity of my first three years in Roumania.

The doors of life seemed suddenly opened and all good things to pour over me like a golden stream; I was young and was considered pretty, and had come back to those of my kind; to those who could laugh, rejoice and be glad. That was how it all seemed to the little captive, to the one who had had to learn too many lessons all at once.

I was standing on a shining threshold looking out upon a stupendous pageant of which my uninitiated eyes saw only the glory.

I was not a very important part of the whole display, but I was given loving welcome; here I was not only on tolerance, but made much of, spoilt, admired, all good things were spread out before me, my hands seemed suddenly full of sunshine, it was ecstasy to be alive. My suppressed youth was taking its revenge.

Down there in the new country, I was in harness, I was merely a little wheel in a watch which was keeping Uncle's time but a little wheel which had to do its part, relentlessly, and no one tried to surround that part with any glamour or make it seem worth while; it was all work and no play, I was with a vengeance the stranger in a strange land. Everything I did seemed always to be wrong and no one understood that when you were young and life runs like fire through your veins, you wanted to be gay sometimes, to laugh, be foolish with companions

of your own age, to use your own faculties, to be a separate entity, someone with a mind of her own, with her own thoughts, her own habits, tastes, ideals, desires.

At Uncle's court everything was denied you, enjoyment was looked upon as frivolity, every word you said was an imprudence, your life was not your own, nor your house, nor your servants, not even your children! Everything was subservient to Uncle and his politics, his Ministers and more especially to a terrible old lady of his court whose tongue was like a "two-edged sword," and who looked upon me as an upstart dangerous to the old order of things. It were more poetical to say that I was the rising sun, but in those days of subjection I in nowise saw myself in such a glorious light.

And now suddenly the contrast of the Moscow Coronation! I felt like a bird, spreading its wings towards springtime after a long heavy winter.

This was the mood I was in; the right mood in which to enjoy what was being offered to us.

Before leaving for this important ceremony Uncle had selected with particular care those who were to accompany us; they were mostly officers, but the King had added to our "suite" a certain old Colonel Georges Rosnovanu, who was well-known for his Russian sympathies. He had built a Russian church in his Moldavian village, loved the Tsar and everything pertaining to Russia, so Uncle had kindly thought of giving this enthusiastic old soul the glorious joy of seeing the Coronation. Uncle had these sudden inspirations of kindness, which helped to make him the big man which he undeniably was. Being an officer of the reserve, old Rosnovanu had had a beautiful "calaraş" uniform made for himself; dark blue with red braiding and when in full uniform, white trousers, and into this garb of his youth he not without difficulty compressed his portly proportions. He had a high colour, a fleshy nose and wore long white whiskers and whenever he met one of the Grand Dukes he insisted upon giving him what he called "*le baiser slav*," the Slav kiss, which consisted of first a kiss on the right shoulder, then one on the left, the third again on the right. This he did each time with convincing ardour to the great amusement of my uncles.

The Imperial Russian court had put a house at our disposal, car-

riages, servants, military guard and every luxury characteristic of Russian lavishness. Several gentlemen had been attached to us and last, but not least, as in a real fairy-story, I had a young page to hold my train, to carry my cloak, to stand behind my chair during the great banquets, gala-representations or parades. He was a military cadet, would be officer next year. He was young and fair and we were exactly the same age. He was called Cherkessow, and also as in a fairy-story, quite rightly fell in love with the princess he was serving.

For many years Cherkessow used to write to me and I would answer or send him my latest photograph. Before going to the Russo-Japanese war he wrote me a last letter, sending me back all I had ever given him in case he should not return. He did not return; and the other day, looking through old papers, I found the touching little packet tied with neat ribbons which was all that remained of Cherkessow, my fair young page.

For Nando too this was a unique holiday. He too was young enough to revel in the enchantment of these wonderful festivities, but he could never give himself up as wholeheartedly to the joy of living as I could. He was ten years older, had been too much repressed, too severely trained, was too careful, too diffident, too shy. It was not without a certain anxiety that he watched the intensity of my delight; he knew the world better than I did, had fewer illusions and less belief in the absolute good faith of his neighbour. More than once Roumania had had to suffer from Russia's ruthless might and this kept Nando on his guard. Besides, this was *my* family, not his; he did not feel as at home as I did, nor was it exactly easy to hold one's own with all my uncles and cousins. There were so many of them, they were so enormous, so sure of themselves, so wealthy and powerful, real autocrats, not particularly careful about other people's feelings; besides, as before mentioned, my Russian relations were merciless teasers, their voices dominated everybody and everything as did their huge size; a mighty breed in fact!

The younger generation were of less imposing stature, they no longer incorporated the real type of the autocrat, there was a disparity between their physique and their power. They seemed less well cut out for their part.

This was particularly evident in the Tsar, who was small, almost

frail-looking. His eyes were kind, had a caressing expression, there was something gentle about him and his voice was low-pitched and soft. Although perfectly dignified he was somewhat dwarfed by the giants of his father's and grandfather's generation. But in those days his family was absolutely loyal to him, they looked up to him as the supreme head before whom all bowed down without questioning in spite of his youth. He was imbued with mystic power: he was the Tsar. This no one forgot. He was young, had married a beautiful princess as young as he was, and life stood open before him; many empty pages upon which he could write history.

The first ceremony we witnessed was the Tsar's solemn entry into Moscow. The young Imperial couple had made a retreat of several days in a monastery beyond the walls of the city so as to prepare themselves in all humility for the coming sacrament.

On the day she became Empress, Alice of Hesse, having been given the name of Alexandra, went over from the Protestant to the Orthodox faith and reverently submitted to its every dictate. How far convinced she was in those days it is difficult to say, but in later years, as we know, she became a fanatical daughter of the Russian Church.

What a wonderful sight it was, that solemn entry into Moscow, into that legendary city where from earliest times the Tsars were crowned! We guests who took no active part in this particular ceremony, looked on from several balconies overhanging the principal street through which the procession passed.

Here comes the Tsar, well to the fore on a tall white horse. He is not clad in gorgeous apparel but in the simple dark green uniform all are accustomed to see him wear, on his head the round tight-fitting astrakhan cap, characteristic of the Russian army. His breast is barred by the light blue ribbon of St. Andrew, on the dark cloth a few diamond stars flash in the sunshine. There is nothing magnificent about his attire, nor is there anything particularly imposing in his bearing, but he sits his horse with the ease of a good rider. He is small but, as before mentioned, his eyes are kind and there is a gentle, almost wistful smile on his lips. In his bearing there is the quiet dignity of one deeply conscious of all he represents at this solemn hour, deeply conscious also of the heavy duties he is taking upon himself. All our

eyes follow him; he is young, he is loved and life lies open before him like an unwritten book.

Two golden coaches follow him at a small distance, magnificent vehicles, such as children picture to themselves in fairy-stories, white horses, glittering trappings, pages, followers. In the first sits his mother, in the second his wife.

On the top of the Dowager Empress's closed carriage shines a crown, a sign that she has already stood a crowned woman before her people, that earthly power is already hers. On her head she wears an almost fantastically gorgeous tiara, her neck is one mass of glittering jewels, her gown and her mantle are of shining gold. Still very popular, still a good-looking woman, she bows to the right, to the left, with that charm peculiar to her family.

The second coach is not crowned and the woman who sits within, though sumptuously attired, has no crown on her head, for only after the Sacrament does she enter into her rights; it is the Empress-mother who to-day still has precedence, and with it all crowned rights.

Much more handsome than her mother-in-law ever was, she sits magnificently upright, but she does not smile and her expression is one of almost painful earnestness. There is a tightness about her lips which is disconcerting in one so young. There is no happiness in the large steady eyes, none of youth's buoyancy in her attitude, none of the sweetness and confidence one expects in a young bride. It is as though she were holding Fate off at arm's-length, as though darkly guessing that life might be a foe, she must set out to meet it sword in hand. She is fully aware of the solemnity of the moment, of all she represents, but it seems to awake dread in her rather than joy.

The golden coach passes, heads are uncovered before the uncrowned brow; she bows very low in response to the homage offered her. She is young, beautiful, dignified, but no smile softens her lips, she looks into no man's eyes but straight before her as though keeping her gaze fixed upon some inner vision—and yet for her also, life stands open like an unwritten book.

All through the many ceremonies, the young Empress never relaxed this severely aloof attitude which was in part no doubt, timidity. Nothing ever seemed to give her pleasure, she seldom smiled, and when she did it was grudgingly as though making a concession. This

of course damped every impulse towards her. In spite of her beauty no warmth emanated from her; in her presence enthusiasm wilted. Serious, earnest-minded, with a high sense of duty and a desire towards all that is good and right; she was nevertheless not of "those who win"; she was too distrustful, too much on the defensive, she was no warming flame. Life, like all else, needs to be loved; those who cannot love life are vanquished from the very start.

How well I can still see Alexandra standing in all her glory, side by side with the Emperor in the golden cathedral in which they were to be crowned. The very atmosphere seemed golden, a golden light enveloped the glittering assembly come to render homage to these youngest amongst the sovereigns of Europe, golden also were Alexandra's robes. All eyes were fixed upon her; a beautiful woman is always a source of interest and how much more so when she stands, crowned before all eyes, a figure apart, raised above her sisters, anointed, imbued with a glamour few ever achieve. And Alexandra was beautiful, she was also tall and dignified, actually dwarfing the Emperor standing beside her. The heavy vestments he wore seemed to overwhelm him, the prodigious crown of his ancestors to be too heavy for his head; instinctively one remembered the giant stature of those gone before him; his face was pale, but there was the light of the mystic in his eyes. But his young wife stood steadily upright, her crown did not appear to crush her, and the golden flow of her mantle, cascading from her shoulders, made her appear even taller than she was. Her face was flushed, her lips compressed; even at this supreme hour no joy seemed to uplift her, not even pride; aloof, enigmatic, she was all dignity but she shed about her no warmth. It was almost a relief to tear one's gaze from her to let it rest upon the Emperor, whose caressing eyes and gentle expression made every man feel his friend.

An impressive ceremony, in a gorgeous setting, the air athrob with chants so solemnly beautiful that they were almost unearthly. They rose and swelled, filling the church with such mighty waves of harmony that one's heart felt like bursting, but when the strain became next to unbearable, the volume of sound would gradually decrease, almost dying away into a whisper; and a great peace, which was a

strange blending of joy and pain, would flood the soul and one was as though released. Through a fragrant haze of incense, mysterious rituals were taking place; it was more like a dream than reality. With slow movements grandly vested priests moved hither and thither, hands raised in gestures of prayer or benediction. Their robes were in tone with those of the saints who, with heavily haloed faces, looked down from their walls upon the great of this world. Wherever the eye rested, gold, nothing but gold, with here and there the flash of a precious stone, red, blue or green. All faces were dim in this atmosphere of solemn expectation, they had taken on something of the immaterialness of the frescoed saints. Alone the figures of the Emperor and Empress stood out with symbolic significance, two shining apparitions imbued for an hour with transient glory. And the thousand tapers reflected in the glittering *iconostas* were like stars in God's Heaven.

The church ceremony over, the newly crowned couple in solemn procession ascended the broad steps of an outward stairway leading to a terrace overlooking the cathedral square. Up, up, over the gorgeous carpet flowing like a scarlet river down towards them, up, up, the dazzling company of their royal guests in their wake, up, up, ever up, as though ascending towards the skies, and having reached the top they turned to face the multitude which had been allowed into the square so as to look upon the newly anointed. Side by side they stood, two diamond-crowned figures at the zenith of their glory, deities, almost, and with the movement of a wave rolling in to shore the people fell to their knees before them, calling God's blessing down upon their crowned heads. A grand sight, a moment of tense, almost supernatural, emotion; and this was in Moscow, in springtime, the air full of the perfume of lilac and of the songs of birds. And the sun pouring down upon the scene was as golden as the Imperial coronation robes!

Moscow! Ancient city of the Tsars, to-day the city of Lenin and Trotsky, of Jerjinski and Stalin. To-day the golden cathedrals are forsaken and on the great square before the Kremlin stands a weird monument in which are exposed the remains of one who in his turn had become something of a deity. In a glass-covered coffin he lies, in a

red-draped chamber, so that all men can look upon his sinister countenance. In silent troops the eternally deceived people pass before his ugly mask of tyranny, now frozen in death. That face is no pleasant sight, but the people who have been told he was a saviour, a deliverer, continue to pass before his embalmed body, expectant, patient, deluded; pass and pass, little caring that the carpet which flowed beneath the great repudiator's feet had been a river of blood instead of the scarlet cloth the Tsar had once trod. And who cares to-day that the adored idols of yesterday, with their five innocent children, are now a charred heap of bones in far Siberia? But even those charred bones were granted no rest. It was not sufficient to chop the mutilated remains of the victims to pieces with a butcher's axe specially sharpened for the occasion, but these remains were cast into the shaft of a forsaken mine, and for fear that the work of annihilation should not be complete enough, hand grenades were thrown down upon them in their horrible grave!

Thus ended the last of the Tsars and his family, but this was but an incident and the people continue to pass in endless file before the hideous grimace of Lenin, still hugging to themselves the threadbare illusion that he had been the prophet of a new golden age, the liberator from the tyrannies of the past.

On the jewelled walls of the now silent Coronation Cathedral the frescoed saints with their heavily haloed heads are gradually paling. Chants ring no more through the vaults, no incense mounts towards the golden cupolas, but peering down on this emptiness the saints seem to be straining their ears, listening, waiting . . . for what? Are they not also ghosts of the past? What matter if their gaunt figures fade quite away? What do they still represent? Who needs them to-day? What is the good of listening? For what are they waiting? What could they hear now but ribald song, curses, whispered denunciations and the smothered sound of weeping?—for in this land of new freedom man has no right even to his tears.

But, unwilling to admit that they have been taken in, the Old and the New World in incomprehensible blindness still try to cling to the forlorn illusion of a new message come from the East.

But having been witness of that Coronation day, I can still see before me the vision of that sun-flooded terrace with those crowned fig-

ures standing like two deities facing their people, and their people, believing in their glory, sinking down before them on their knees.

It would be impossible to enumerate all the festivities which took place during those three weeks in May; there were parades, processions, balls, banquets and occasional family meetings, but these were rare, as most of the ceremonies were official.

An interesting sight was the solemn receptions of the many deputations come from the four corners of the vast Empire.

Decked in gorgeous apparel, surrounded by the Imperial Family and their royal guests, the Tsar and his wife received the homage of many quaintly garbed envoys from the North, South, East and West of their mighty realm. Slit-eyed Tartars, mysterious-looking Chinese, slim-waisted Circassians, Lapps, Finns, and many picturesque personages strangely reminiscent of the Thousand and One Nights, and all these differently complexioned deputies brought gifts to lay at the feet of the young sovereigns. Dusky sables, snow-white ermines, gold and precious stones, rare cashmeres, costly carpets and richly rippling brocades, many-coloured, of rare texture and exquisite design, shimmering veils and glittering embroideries, gift-bearers in endless file, resembling the classical procession of the biblical Three Kings from the East. Then in turn came deputies of the Army and Navy, of the Church, the nobles, the peasants, and finally an endless stream of ladies in Russian court-dress which gave such special colour and picturesqueness to all Russian court ceremonies.

These were fatiguing ordeals for the Emperor and Empress, and I can still see how Alix's never very happy face became more and more pathetic as the hours lengthened and the stream of congratulations never seemed to come to an end.

I was at an age when everything enchanted me and dress in itself was a great pleasure. I thoroughly enjoyed decking myself out in all my fine clothes specially made for the occasion. I had dresses in every colour of the rainbow and although to-day they would appear absurd to us, at that time they were supremely *chic* and chosen with great care. But the attire in which I reaped my greatest success was a gown and court mantle Queen Carmen Sylva had given me. The poet-queen, inspired by my extreme youth, by my fair hair and blue eyes, had de-

clared that she must make of me a real fairy-princess. So she ordered a dress and court train which were entirely embroidered with trailing branches of wild roses, the background covered with a thousand falling petals; even the veil, which I wore beneath a circular crown of diamonds, was strewn with rose petals. This dress, worked in one of our Roumanian schools, was certainly very becoming and I was immensely elated by the effect it made, and it can well be imagined that so many roses on a royal mantle could not leave my fair young page quite indifferent; each day of service became more precious and the final hour of parting was heart-rending!

People used to say to me: "We like to see you pass, you look so happy, and always seem to be thoroughly enjoying yourself." This was exactly true; I was enjoying myself with all my heart, in fact the joy of it all, the glamour, the beauty, the atmosphere of constant admiration which surrounded me, had slightly gone to my head. My suppressed youth and spirits were responding almost dangerously to all this spoiling and adulation. Russians catch fire easily, and Slav tongues are soft. Besides, it was my first revelation of that power which is woman's power and the discovery was pleasant. This was indeed an inebriating contrast to the life I led at Uncle Carol's court, and the perfume of the incense burnt before me was decidedly sweet. I was too young to know that "all is not gold that glitters." As yet I had learnt no philosophy; to me all outward appearances were real and all declaration true.

One cruel event, though, marked with scarlet streak these sumptuous days in Moscow. A huge popular feast had been planned upon the field of Klodinsky just beyond the town, where village folk in great numbers were to be fed and clothed. Souvenirs with the Tsar's portrait were to be given to each so as to carry his effigy into the farthest parts of the realm.

The newly crowned couple, accompanied by their many royal guests, were to go in great pomp to look on at the distribution of these gifts to thousands and thousands of peasants called together from every part of the great Empire.

By some fault of organization a frightful crush took place, the multitude all rushing at the same moment towards one point. Thousands

of men, women and children lost their lives on this day which was to have been a day of rejoicing and good cheer. It became instead a bloody disaster as sinister as a battlefield. This mournful event very naturally cast a shadow over all the ceremonies and festivities which were still to follow. Alexandra, always inclined to melancholy, was of course cruelly impressed by this tragic happening, and voices were heard whispering that it was a bad omen for the reign that had just begun.

That night there was a ball at the French Embassy. I remember that the poor Empress did all in her power to try and have it put off, begged to be allowed to abstain from any festivity that night, but in vain: France was Russia's chief ally, she must not be offended; tremendous preparations had been made for the monarchs' reception, they would have to go. Such is the life of crowned heads. They must crush their natural impulses, control their emotions, nor is it ever permitted to them to weep their own tears. No doubt many that night considered the Empress heartless because she went to a ball on the evening of the great disaster, yet God alone knows how much rather she would have stayed at home to pray for the dead!

The Grand Duke Serge, then Governor of Moscow, was held by many to be responsible for this fearful misfortune, and beautiful Aunt Ella's despair was pitiful to see; but the festivities had to go on. One Embassy after the other gave brilliant receptions, the great Powers vying with each other in pomp and splendour. But though magnificently arranged, nothing was more dismal than that ball at the French Embassy; everybody felt that it ought to have been put off.

For all official processions the royal guests were paired off in couples according to precedence. It was Victor Emmanuel, then Crown Prince of Italy, who fell to my share. We were not particularly well matched as I was a good deal taller than he was. He was conventionally polite without being specially amiable or attentive. Abrupt of speech, he spoke in short, hacked sentences, his lower jaw jutting out somewhat pugnaciously. We had not overmuch to say to each other, but I was interested in a dawning romance between him and his future wife, Princess Helen of Montenegro, who made special friends with me because of my cavalier. On all occasions she would seek my

company, pretending to be jealous of me. I soon understood the meaning of this innocent little subterfuge and that *I* was not the real attraction. Helen was a tall, handsome girl with superb eyes and pleasant ways, she was both vivacious and amusing and not at all shy. Her old father, the Prince of Montenegro, was also amongst the guests, most conspicuous in his picturesque dress. Politically he played a very special part and was treated with marked civility. I have no clear remembrance of how at that time young Victor Emmanuel met the advances of the vivacious princess. I liked her very much, there was something fresh and spontaneous about her; she had, so to say, retained a whiff of the breezes of her mountain home, which my mother had so interestingly described in her letters.

Ducky, in those days Grand Duchess of Hesse, belonged to the inner circle, her husband being brother of the Tsarina and of beautiful Aunt Ella in whose house they lived. Our chief object, however, was to come together as much as possible; to share things still heightened our pleasure in life. Ducky and I were striking contrasts, I so fair and she so dark and somewhat sombre and melancholy, whilst I was gay and always amused. Being both of us gloriously young we had a large following of admirers. Our cousin, Boris Vladimirovitch, became one of my great friends. About two years my junior, he was still quite a boy and his fervent homage was dear to me. Gay or sulky by turns, he had an attractive rather husky voice, kind eyes and a humorous smile which crinkled his forehead into unexpected lines. Not exactly handsome, he had nevertheless great charm, and a slight lisp added a certain quaintness to his speech. I used to imitate his lisp, which never offended him. Our friendship lasted many years. Later, when become over-sophisticated, a man disillusioned by too easy pleasures and success, he would occasionally declare with a deep sigh that I had been the first love of his life. The sigh was the genuine sigh of one who, too rich and too spoilt, had in a short time travelled far from the first clean ideals of his early youth. "But you, Missy dear," he declared with his gentle lisp, "have always remained a lovely dream and I thank you for having remained a dream I never destroyed." Dear Boris; born with ideals he was too lazy to stick to, he remained ever unsatisfied. Later he went astray, was always seeking for a happiness he never quite found; but we were real friends and the remem-

brance of him stands amongst the emotions it is good to look back upon. We none of us in those early days knew anything of life; it lay so dazzling before us, it looked so fresh, so easy, so happy, so clean.

As through a mist of tears I see all those many faces who shared our joy and fun, they all pass before me; I murmur to myself half-forgotten names and they awake in me an echo of the old thrill of emotion. One's heart beat so easily in those days! Most of them were officers, brilliant, dashing, sentimental, daring, full of Russian ardour mixed with that almost intolerable melancholy so characteristic of the Slav, a melancholy which tore at your heartstrings and disturbed your peace. How many of those gay cavaliers are still of this world, I wonder? How many have escaped the horror of war and Russia's downfall? Gadon, Efimowitch, Schlitter, Zedler, Junkowski, Grahe Etter, Belaief, Hartory and so many more whose bright eyes and enthusiastic homage made our joy more sparkling, more intense.

Vorbei! as also our youth and that mad irresponsible gaiety is a thing of the past, dead with a time which has been wiped off the face of the earth. But the memory remains like a dwindling light shining at the far end of a long passage, a light from which we are retreating farther and farther into shadow. Youth, the glad season of life;—youth, “the breezy call of incense-breathing morn.”

To recover from the fatigues of the Coronation festivities, Uncle Serge had invited the young crowned couple to go for a few weeks' rest to his country place, Ilinsky, near Moscow, the same place where poor young Alix, Uncle Paul's wife, had died a few years previously. A gay company followed in their train.

The more official guests had departed; only the closer members of the family remained and an inner circle of friends. But Ilinsky being too small to house so many, those who could not find room there were invited by Prince and Princess Usupoff to Archangelsky, their palatial country residence near by. Nando and I were amongst these. Archangelsky was a small Versailles without the Occidental varnish, it was overflowing with riches but there was a touch of Oriental neglect about its splendour.

Lavish hospitality and good cheer; a Roumanian gipsy band, horses to ride, boats on the river, carriages of every size and shape, dancing,

picnics, moonlight suppers and endless *parties de plaisir*, visiting other country houses in the neighbourhood, and at all hours of the day and night the wild, wailing, laughing, sobbing gipsy melodies accompanying our every move; ravishing music vastly adding to the emotional excitement of those somewhat irresponsible days.

Our hostess was still young and an exceedingly attractive woman. Her grey eyes were luminously clear and intense, her smile enchanting; her hair, smoothly drawn back, left her forehead bare, which was unusual in those days of fringes and frizzled coiffures. An attractive woman full of kindness, eager to spread joy around her. Her husband was somewhat heavy, but he too was kind and his hospitality knew no limit. The Zumarokow Usupoffs belonged to the richest families of Russia.

Nando and I were continually driving over to Ilinsky, followed by a troop of the Archangelsky guests. Amusement followed amusement, it was a period of buoyant, almost mad gaiety, a giddy whirl of enjoyment, few of us except Nando ever pausing to think. Nando was somewhat appalled by the pace we were going and kept remembering how little Uncle would approve of this sort of life. I am sorry to say that for the time being I had absolutely shaken off King Carol's shadow, and did not wish to remember that all this glorious folly was transient and would soon have to come to an end.

Amongst the guests at Archangelsky was a certain Prince Wittgenstein, officer in the Cossacks of the Imperial Guard. This young man was one of the gayest of the gay. Although not specially good-looking, he had a magnificent figure with a waist as slim as a woman's. The long Cossack caftan suited him to perfection. When not on service the officers had permission to wear this caftan in whatever colour they preferred. Young Wittgenstein affected a dull dark plum, which seemed to have been chosen with special cunning, being a colour which both attracted and satisfied the eye. His heelless, high, soft, leather boots gave a feline quality to his tread. To complete the picture we may add a tall fur cap set at a rakish angle, a gorgeous dagger stuck into his silver belt, and he stands before us a figure worthy of Elinor Glyn's most dashing romances, a personage well suited to sow disquiet in feminine hearts.

I never had much to do with young Wittgenstein, but being a keen

rider he appreciated my horsemanship. He soon discovered that, when in the saddle, nothing could daunt me, that on horseback I was fearless and inclined to recklessness; in this we saw eye to eye.

Wittgenstein was the possessor of a wild, unkempt, fierce-looking Cossack horse. Dark brown with flowing tail and mane, he had iron sinews and an anxious eye. Untrained and fidgety, he was reputed to be a difficult mount, and was in fact exactly the sort of horse which you would expect young Wittgenstein to ride. Inevitably the hoped-for moment came when he proposed that I should try this exciting animal, which he declared could beat at a trot any other horse at full gallop; Nando protested, endeavouring to put in a veto, to use his authority; but in vain, I was just then, alas, not inclined to docility, and the thought of riding this wild horse was my supremest ambition.

That ride remains one of the most glorious memories of my youth, there was a thrill about it which I have never been able to forget. The moment I was on his back that untamed horse and I understood each other absolutely and I was ready to accept any wager. I was given a few hundred yards' start and then off flew all the other riders in wild pursuit. What a race that was! A glorious morning, the sky full of the song of larks, the dew still on the ground. Straight as an arrow ran my horse, steady as a torpedo on its course. The pace we went brought tears to my eyes, but never once did that astonishing animal break from a trot to a gallop.

Having reached the point set as our goal, I remember turning my horse to face the onrush of my pursuers who came pounding up the small hillock on which I stood awaiting them. Cheers and exclamations! I had won my bet and bending down I threw my arms round my horse's neck and kissed him in exultant gratitude. Oh, how I longed to carry off that priceless trotter, to take him back with me to Roumania! But this supreme joy was not granted me.

As can well be imagined, Mamma, who was at Ilinsky, looked on at our amusements with a certain disapproval. She continued to be chief censor of our lives, her eye was all-seeing, her word law, and her dissatisfaction when expressed was never lightly set aside.

During the Coronation festivities she had kept Ducky and me in severe order, often thoroughly disapproving of our clothes. Her withering criticism of the way we wore our veils under diadems, which she

considered too picturesque and not orthodox enough, still makes my cheeks burn. She declared we wanted to look like Elisabeth in *Tannhäuser*, and in this perhaps she was not far wrong, as the style of clothing of that luckless lady was certainly amongst our ideals. But Mamma declared our tendency towards picturesqueness "affectation," and when we knew she would be present, we had to refrain from too much artistic imagination. A quite unexpected ally was however found in the oldest grand duchess of the family, Aunt Sari, Mamma's aunt, widow of the Grand Duke Constantine, one of Alexander II's brothers. A great *élégante* in her day, she still took pleasure in dress, knew what was becoming, and appreciated our efforts to beautify our attire. Hearing Mamma scold us she exclaimed: "Let the children look as nice as they can; I like to see the young have ideas of their own and your daughters seem to have taste." Aunt Sari *certainly* had taste. In the Coronation church she stood out an unforgettable figure; exceedingly tall and still astonishingly upright for her age, her hair was snow-white; clothed from head to foot in silver she wore a sparkling diadem like frosted sunrays on her *cacosknic*. Having a too great wealth of pearls to wear them *all* round her neck, she had fixed half a dozen ropes at her waist with an enormous diamond pin; they hung down along her gown in a milky cascade. She was so pale and shining white that seen against the golden walls of the cathedral she seemed to be covered with hoar-frost. Though she was near upon seventy, or even older, I remember her more vividly than anyone else, excepting, of course, the Empress and beloved Aunt Ella.

Brother Alfred was also at Ilinsky, and one day swimming in the river he saved me at a moment when I thought I was going to drown. Unaccustomed to swim in a stream, I had not counted on the current, which suddenly began to swirl me away. Alfred gave me a helping hand at a critical moment.

Uncle Serge was an excellent host. He wanted everybody to have a good time, but like Mamma, he was severe and critical, whilst Uncle Paul was our great defender when Mamma accused us of frivolity. "Laisse-les, c'est si bon de les voir s'amuser, sait-on ce qui leur réserve la vie, on n'est jeune qu'une fois!" and I remember going up and kissing him. Dear Uncle Paul, he had such a pleasant voice and he was

never unkind to anyone, and what a beautiful figure he had! The two brothers Serge and Paul were devoted to each other, but they were a great contrast, the one severe almost to fierceness, the other gentle, easy-going and forgiving. I dearly loved them both.

CHAPTER XVII

BACK TO ROUMANIA

AT last the cruel hour for parting sounded; somewhat relieved, I believe, Nando tore me away from these too congenial surroundings. My leave-taking was tearful; I well realized that this was an episode that could never be lived over again. Good-bye to Ducky, to Mamma, to all my admirers, to beautiful Aunt Ella, to the uncles and cousins *and* to the beloved Cossack horse.

We were given an Imperial train and very slowly we travelled through vast Russia down to Odessa, where a Roumanian ship fetched us. Here we parted with those who had been attached to us during all of our stay. It was the end of the dream.

As can be imagined, the return to duty and abnegation was not easy. This was *lendemain de fête* with a vengeance. Everything seemed small, dull, shabby, cramped, uninteresting; life flat, prospects colourless. The only real joy was to see my babies again; but after a long parting even one's children seem little strangers; besides, Aunt Elisabeth, profiting by my absence, had been busily making propaganda on her own behalf. There was also an enemy in the camp, Cousin Charly.

For many years in succession Charly came to Sinaia in the autumn season. Having been the chief promoter of our marriage, she felt that she had a right to profit by the results. Certain members of the family who had had to suffer from Charly's want of sincerity declared that Charly always had to have a king "up her sleeve." It used to be the old King of Saxony, later it was the King of Sweden, but for the time being, to my detriment, it was King Carol, and Roumania became her hunting-ground. I had not yet a firm footing in my new country; Aunt, after her exile, had to win back her popularity and Charly knew how to use cleverly the existing circumstances to her own advantage. Now that she could no more patronize me, it did not suit her that I should make headway too rapidly, nor too easily.

Indignation meetings against me were held in the palace. Charly headed these and found a strong ally in the old lady, already once mentioned, who played the part of chief inquisitor. My faults and failings were discussed and deplored; she drew Uncle and Aunt's affection away from me to herself, and I was seldom in favour whilst she was throned in Castel Peleş. Outwardly she was sweet, affectionate, remembering old jokes from home, speaking to me about Mamma, about my sisters, but behind my back she was pulling me to pieces with that sweet voice once so dear to me. Her husband, Bernard Erbprinz of Saxe-Meiningen, came with her; she never liked him, but for all that he was devoted to her and he imagined she was the most perfect of wives, which shows how clever she was. Both passionate soldiers, Uncle and he would discuss military questions by the hour, but the King preferred still more talking politics with irresistible Charly who had for him unlimited prestige, although Uncle in general had none too good an opinion of feminine intelligence. Charly's clever way of seeming to know everything better than anyone else, of being initiated into the most hidden secrets of State; her soft, insinuating, gentle manner, had quite taken him in; he accepted all she said as Bible truth, and it was greatly owing to Charly's intrigues that King Carol's animosity against the Emperor William was kept alive. Charly had a grudge against her brother and was glad to do him a bad turn whenever she could. In praise and in calumny, Charly's voice was equally low-pitched and sweet. Wise as he was, Uncle could just be caught by his belief in the over-importance of politics. Each thing was to him "an affair of State," and Charly knew cleverly how to pander to this peculiarity of his, so that he became her dupe. Nando and I hated to see him being thus deceived; we knew Charly better than Uncle did, but we were not in a position to open his eyes.

I do not feel that Aunt ever really cared for Charly; she was not exactly jealous, but accustomed to being the oracle, the one who talked and was generally religiously listened to, she did not particularly relish taking a back seat whilst Charly perorated. Not well up in politics, Carmen Sylva resented being left out in the cold whilst her wise husband discussed deep world problems with their much younger and undeniably attractive guest. But when it was a question of criticizing me and my young *ménage*, then they understood each other all too well.

I was exceedingly lonely in those days. It was still considered dangerous that I should have friends, and I could not really get accustomed to this atmosphere so overruled by political considerations, and Charly, established as a favourite, cleverly understood how to show me up in the most unfavourable light.

I never seemed to be able to gain the approval of "the Old Palace" as we called the Royal Court; I was considered too English, too free and easy, too frivolous, I was too fond of dress, of riding, of outdoor life, I was too outspoken, I had not enough respect for conventions or etiquette.

Though passionately maternal, I was considered too young and too foolish to have the right of directing my children's education. I was sometimes very unhappy, and Nando's plea for patience on my side and ever again patience, was not particularly comforting; there was a great feeling of emptiness and nothing to hold on to, no one to turn to for help.

In my house there was, however, a motherly soul who, though humble, was a real comfort, and that was old Nana, the children's nurse. Miss Green was a figure worthy of Dickens. Broad of girth, loud-voiced and jovial, she did not mince her words; possessor of a perfectly clean conscience, she feared no man, and the fact that she had already served several royal families, both in England and Russia, gave her a certain prestige. She knew all my relations on both sides, and this in itself was a link.

I have seen old Green stand up bravely before stern King Carol, arms akimbo, and give him, in atrocious French, a piece of her mind when she considered that "the Palace" had been unfair to her beloved princess. Never had woman stauncher defender than I had in old Nana. Her belief in me was absolute, and many a time when feeling too completely forsaken and misunderstood, I have laid my head upon her ample bosom to sob out all my grief.

I am ashamed to say that there were times during these early years when I absolutely wallowed in my misery. Though generally gay and optimistic, I have known *Weltschmerz* of the most poignant kind.

Old Green was an antidote; she would begin by weeping with me, then with a loud sniff she would put tears aside and take repossession of her broad good-humour. Patting me on the back she would urge me to

cheer up, and would launch forth upon one of her endless yarns about one or the other of the royal children who had been her charges. Her stories were enhanced by pantomimic play; she was most expressive, and if not orthodox, her language was certainly picturesque. At times even, I was thoroughly admonished, as though I too were but a child. Nando also came in for his share of scolding, and if the truth were told, both he and Uncle stood slightly in awe of old Green. Auntly frankly detested her; Nana was like a fortress amidst changing tides. Poetical language and honeyed words made no impression upon her. For her a spade was a spade, right was right and wrong, wrong; she believed in her Bible and Prayer Book, had a good number of healthy texts and proverbs at her disposal but was not maudlin about her religious beliefs. Everything about Green was square, strong, healthy, uncompromising; she was certainly not refined, her "h's" were in the wrong places, but she was "true blue," neither flattery, smiles nor threats could buy old Green. Auntly, wanting to have the upper hand in my nursery, found herself up against someone who knew how to resist. This was a most unwelcome obstacle, so deep and numerous plots were laid to try and oust old Green.

Truth obliges me to say that, whatever intrigues there were, did not start in our house. Our only desire was to live in peace with everyone, and to have a reasonable amount of freedom within our own four walls. Nando was too loyal to existing authority to contemplate rebellion, and I too great a believer in all men to dream that there could be some who willingly stirred up strife. This was however the case, alas! and caused endless trouble.

I was ready to be a loving niece, I longed to find a motherly friend in Auntly, I wanted to keep alive my admiration for her, but those who incited her to try to come between me and my children were ill-advised. I was not prepared for the endless machinations of those whose very *raison d'être* was intrigue. With open eyes and colours flying I walked into their every trap. It was an ugly game on their side and quite unjustified, as I was full of good feeling towards them, never doubting that here, as everywhere else, I would be loved and accepted for what I was: a whole-hearted, joy-loving young woman, believing that the world was meant for happiness and human beings born to be friends. I had

no idea that, representing the future, I was a danger, someone who must not become conscious of her power.

Though by nature unsuspicious and not particularly observant, I did finally perceive that often when unannounced I broke in upon Aunt's circle, my cheeks, rosy from healthy exercise, the breath of the woods in every fold of my dress, a hush much resembling embarrassment would fall upon the company assembled around Aunt's chair. Probably I had been the object of a conversation they would hardly have liked me to overhear, and Aunt's beautifully simulated delight at seeing me had not the ring of entire sincerity. These people were not my friends, even my inexperience understood this: I was an outsider, *die Fremde*, I was undereducated, unintellectual, with distressingly English tastes and habits; there were dogs at my heels, flowers in my hands, sometimes even there was actually mud on my shoes, but—and this only very gradually dawned upon me—there were children in my house.

In later years I understood Aunt better and her hungry longing for what had been denied her, that aching longing which turned to envy when I, little realizing what I represented, invaded her darkened sanctuary with my insolent youth.

Yes, I was an invincible reality. I did not know this; I never realized that when I came into their closed circle, I was the future, striding victoriously into the room.

Aunt would throw out her arms: "Ach lieb Kindchen, Du bist der wahre Frühling," and she would picturesquely press me to her heart. "Sit down here at my feet and listen, darling," and I would sit down, and all the old ladies I had disturbed would sit down again and also the ecstatic young girls who kept their eyes glued upon the poet-queen's face. There were generally also a few men in the room, mostly long-haired and pale-faced, writers, musicians, a stray architect, a sleepy general and a few nondescript youth who would discreetly lean about in shadowy corners, whether amused or bored it is difficult to say. The air was always vibrant with tense excitement over some topic, some new hobby, some bit of music, of embroidery, some painting or the marvellous discovery of some new book. Nothing was ever taken calmly, everything had to be rapturous, tragic, excessive or extravagantly comic. Aunt always imagined she was discovering rare souls. She could not admit those around her to be ordinary, so she saw wonderful

talents in quite commonplace people, beauty where there was none and wits in many who were merely pretentious and often absurd. She saw everything and everyone through the prism of her desires. Her rooms were always crowded with the most miscellaneous company; she needed a continual audience, and this audience was trained to hang on her every word, to follow her every mood, they had to laugh or weep, praise or deplore according to the keynote given. Her own work, painting or writing, was, of course, the central interest and voices were raised in never-ceasing appreciation. She was relentlessly diligent and her imagination was never at rest; unfortunately her taste was not always equal to her perseverance, and at times it was arduous to find words of praise in keeping with the truth. But nevertheless many precious little works did her busy fingers create.

Carmen Sylva was a marvellous conversationalist, but what was difficult to stand was that she never chose her public. It must be admitted that she continually "cast her pearls before swine." Already in my youth this peculiarity of hers made me acutely uncomfortable. Once launched upon a subject she would be carried away by her own eloquence and quite ignoring the quality of her audience, would speak of her soul, of her most sacred and intimate beliefs, of her childhood, of the real and imaginary slights received at home, of the non-comprehension of her mother, of her husband. She would tell about her maladies, about the maladies and peculiarities of her relations, of her own and their matrimonial disappointments with the most intimate physical details, all this with the sublime unconsciousness peculiar to the poetic temperament which has the need of weeping and rejoicing in public, of expressing its every sentiment without the slightest restraint and with a complete lack of humour.

Always sensitively conscious of atmosphere, it was a keen suffering to me when I felt that others, seemingly interested, were in reality laughing up their sleeves. I often longed to implore Aunty to stop discoursing on certain subjects. She was always so terribly in earnest whilst, like all Latins, the Roumanians are sceptical and have a sharp, not always kindly, sense of humour. Sentimental rhapsodies irresistibly awake their irony; they do not want at all hours of the day to be reminded that they have a soul or even "tired loins" or breaking hearts. Certain reprehensible old ladies or hysterical spinsters would hang upon

their Queen's every word and with clasped hands and ecstatic exclamations, stimulate her outpourings, their handkerchieves ever ready to wipe away tears of emotion. I hated them for encouraging Aunty to give herself thus away so unreservedly in public.

I must admit that my special enemy, the one I have called the Chief Inquisitor, who was also somewhat Aunty's jailer, did her best to bring back soaring conversations to normal spheres. She was an ambitious, unkind, old woman, worldly and hard-hearted, but in the midst of a company of exaggerated sycophants she kept the sense of values.

Far be it from me to want to diminish the value of Carmen Sylva's salon but I should not be painting a true picture if I did not lay stress upon this peculiarity, so characteristic, of seeing everybody and everything in unreal proportions. It explains many of the tragedies of her life. She never could resign herself to a normal atmosphere.

Carmen Sylva often gathered really remarkable people about her, musicians, poets, writers, philosophers, scientists, doctors. I have met in her room many celebrated men and artists such as Sauer, Sarasate, Vandyke, Schlesack, Ysaye, Raoul Pugno, Thibaut, Hubermann, Sarah Bernhardt, Réjane, Catulle Mendès, and others whose names do not come to me at the moment. She knew how to appreciate them, how to draw out their sympathy, their enthusiasm. She would fire their imagination with flattering words, she would listen to them breathlessly and shower intelligent appreciation down on their heads. They generally went away completely under her spell. Somewhat of a muse herself, she really was a genuine protector of every art. Carmen Sylva had a vast correspondence with interesting people and wrote beautiful letters. All this was admirable and enriched our lives, but our trials began when real talents were lacking and she would try to fill the vacancy with anything upon which she could lay hands.

Aunty could not exist without the excitement of continually discovering rare beings and of promoting their talents or peculiarities. The poor quality of these substitutes was more than made up for by her own enthusiasm and that rare, though somewhat disconcerting capacity of seeing everything according to her own ecstatic measure.

This would have been most satisfactory had it sufficed her discreetly to glorify these protégés, for her own private gratification. But Aunty

wanted to share all things with all men, even her faked geniuses, and we were continually called upon to adore, admire and go into raptures over these very ordinary and sometimes even absurd personages. This was sometimes amusing, but more often a great ordeal, as, alas! we did not possess her rose-coloured spectacles.

I remember how she was once patronizing an elderly Frenchman in whom, although he was professionally a painter, she imagined to have discovered a rare musical genius, declaring that, not only did he know every opera by heart, but that he could, unlike any other ordinary mortal, sing in turn the parts of tenor, baritone and bass. Although really musical and herself an artist, Auntie would actually invite us all to sit around and listen to the self-complacent fellow who warbled impossibly in every key. Carried away by genuine enthusiasm, really believing him to be as wonderful as she declared he was, with clasped hands she would go into ecstasies, whilst we on the contrary had from time to time to escape from the room for fear of giving way to too unseemly fits of laughter. Into the bargain, the man would assume the attitudes of a second-rate actor. Whilst impersonating a tenor he would, hand on heart, send melting looks to the younger ladies, or changing suddenly into a baritone he would pose as the virile and energetic conqueror. When it was the turn of the bass he would take up the attitudes of a high-priest singing in a temple, or a "heavy father" in distress. As a comic performance this would have been unique, but having to be taken seriously it was a strain our laughter muscles could hardly endure.

I have also known Auntie suddenly glorify as beauties extraordinarily plain people; she would rave about their hair, their eyes, the shape of their noses; about the perfection of their feet and hands. And whosoever was momentary favourite had also to be admired by others who were eternally called upon to enter in with her praise.

Quite in the earliest days at Bucarest I once came into Auntie's room and found her pacing up and down, arm in arm with an elderly Englishwoman of haggard countenance and hungry eyes whose meagre but fair hair was streaming down her back. "Oh, come in, darling! you must see Edith's lovely hair!" Edith's face expressed a sort of astonished gratitude, she had never been aware before that she had lovely hair. This same Edith fell in love with one of the royal A.D.C.'s.

We have had all manner of A.D.C.'s in my time, tall and short, lean

and stout, cheerful and morose, ceremonious and jocular, good-looking and plain, intelligent and commonplace. Edith's A.D.C. was plain but he considered himself a lady-killer. He wore a short brown beard, and his hair being scarce, he brushed it with tender care from the nape of his neck, up over the back of his head to end in a swirl on his forehead. He spoke with studied gentility and liked to hear himself talk, often closing his eyes affectedly whilst his somewhat pale fingers toyed with the ends of his aiguillettes. He considered himself a wit, whilst in reality he was absurdly insipid, but though clever and highly cultured, poor Edith allowed her middle-aged heart to be moved by this man and his ways.

Aunty, greedy for romance in any form, believed that here she had stumbled upon the real thing. She began spinning her golden web around the elderly lovers who were, to say the least, somewhat absurd but also a little pathetic. I remember certain court lunches when "the man and the maid" beneath the sun of queenly smiles gave way somewhat too conspicuously to their tender sentiments, the haggard lady leaning over the table whilst the conceited colonel let himself be adored, a smirking expression of satisfied vanity glued to his face; he had never before dreamed of being quite such a fine fellow.

Though Uncle was always present at these meals, he never observed anything as unimportant as flirtations; absorbed by much more weighty problems, he was conveniently blind. Not so my husband however, and I had a certain difficulty in restraining his indignation and making him see the funny side of the little comedy. But Aunty was in her element, she had before her not a faded old maid with washed-out blue eyes and an absurd manikin in a uniform, but a couple of lovers; the eternal song was being sung, she truly heard nightingales and saw blossoms blooming round their heads.

Of course poor Edith's romance came to an untimely end. The busy king may have been blind, but not so others seated at his table and having, because of Edith's infatuation, become a favourite, the Colonel was beginning to sun himself too comfortably in the royal atmosphere. The Colonel had a family, and the family had ambitions. It would have been better had they not—but!— Well, the Chief Inquisitor was on guard, she cared little about nightingales and spring blossoms and at court favourites are short-lived.

Edith was persuaded that she needed a holiday and the Chief Inquisitor made it evident to His Majesty that she was more useful in England than in Roumania and His Majesty, having had his eyes opened, agreed with the one whose business it was to purge the Queen's life of those who wanted to soar too high. Edith never returned from England; the Colonel was given a regiment in a provincial town.

Poor Auntie was eternally getting into trouble because of her uncontrolled flights of imagination. It was pathetic to watch the rise and fall of her successive favourites, and the dust raised when they crashed. I also often got into trouble, but not in the same way.

Auntie was always elaborating some tremendous scheme, some fantastic plan for the welfare of her people, for the good of humanity. She never saw anything small, everything had to have dangerously huge proportions.

A more altruistic woman never lived; she was ready to part with her last penny, to take the dress off her own back to relieve suffering or satisfy a supplicant, but because of this unstinted charity towards all men she fell an easy prey to impostors. Most women have to pay for their sentimental indiscretions; such an event, I believe, never upset Auntie's life, though in her youth she must have been exceedingly attractive with her fine figure, dark curly hair, sparkling blue eyes and magnificent teeth, but she was too high-flown, too much the eternally singing muse to fall into the usual sort of sentimental dangers; she scattered herself too much. Her pitfalls were of another kind.

She believed all things possible, and having no sense of proportion, nor of the absurd, she would listen with flaming enthusiasm to the greatest humbug a child would have seen through. Sensing her credulity, many cast their nets over her, and being without reticence in what she told and confided to the most casual acquaintance, she was eternally putting herself into the hands of people, both male and female, who, profiting by her confidences, gave endless trouble.

Some sort of row or blow-up was sure to follow every one of Carmen Sylva's elaborate schemes; she made promises she could not keep, spent money she did not possess, appointed people to non-existent posts; she wrote letters, gave recommendations, received odd people and believed perfectly sincerely that she was saving souls. I have seen

her most ignobly betrayed and taken in, I have seen those she showered her kindness upon turn against and calumniate her, and constantly did the King have to retrieve her out of the hands of impostors, save her from the hopeless muddles and difficulties she had got into.

This quite naturally strained their relations with each other; Auntie stuck desperately to those she had believed in, would seldom admit that she had been cheated, convinced on the contrary that she and they were being persecuted and misunderstood.

I pitied both King and Queen in turns. They were such strong and splendid personalities, but his sober and implacable logic and her high-flown fantasy did not spell peace. Uncle suffered from a complete lack of imagination, was stern and serious to an almost exaggerated degree; everything to him was an important problem. This often made life heavy, the court atmosphere unbreathable for those who wanted freedom, but his iron will and unshakable belief in himself and his own point of view made him absolute master; his decrees were seldom disobeyed, but occasionally revolt boiled in the heart of his family. I was not in sympathy with all Auntie's exaggerations; I was not at home in her circle of intimates, felt ill at ease when she kept soaring upon the high wings of her fantasy whilst a company of adorers flattered her to her own detriment, but I *do* think that she had a hard time of it. Uncle was a rigorous master.

And yet no man can judge for another, can entirely enter into another's feelings, understand the needs of his soul. Auntie's vocation was to be a martyr; she, so to say, revelled in this attitude. Drama and confusion were perhaps as necessary to her as sunshine and peace are to others. She had no desire to live in an everyday world, and sometimes I had the feeling that her griefs were to her a luxury; she actually exulted in them. They were part of her being as well as the eternal excitement of the unknown, the thirst for tragedies that might at any moment stir her to a magnificent outpour of poetry and grand language. She did not *want* to see people and things in their true proportions, it would have been too uninteresting, too commonplace. Her imagination had to be kept in a state of ebullition. I remember how one day she exclaimed whilst telling me about a young girl, the favourite of the season: "She is a beauty, my dear, a real beauty, but the astonishing thing is that she does not know it and that no one sees it!" That was

Auntie all over. The girl was plain, had a pimply, sallow complexion and a little button of a nose set in a nondescript, uninteresting face. Her eyes, it is true, were dark and vivacious, but the girl herself was modest, unassuming, and never dreamed of being anything else but comfortably commonplace.

I have seen several others, however, who had their heads turned by these unexpected outbreaks of admiration, and one even, who, after having been thus glorified quite beyond reality, could never more find her footing amongst ordinary circumstances and mortals. But Auntie having been the only one to class her amongst the demigods, she is to-day a wandering and pathetic figure who has lost her *milieu*.

Yes, Auntie led a strange, unreal life, in a hothouse atmosphere where queer growths sprang up around her, to fade completely away when she was no more there to project her imagination upon them.

Besides, her enthusiasms were not always long-lived, they flamed too high to be durable; she was eternally discovering new prodigies, so that I have seen many glorified during a season wither away into oblivion as though they had never been.

In my youthful conceit I was inclined to class all those who swarmed round Carmen Sylva as false prophets; I felt hostile towards their often evident insincerity. Occasionally I would try to take my place amongst them, but was ever again discouraged by the want of healthy fresh air in her surroundings, so more than once I missed perceiving those of real value who were sunning themselves in her presence.

Thus it was with Georges Enescu, our greatest Roumanian violinist and composer. Having early discovered his remarkable talent, Auntie helped and encouraged him in every way from the time he was a boy. His inborn and surprising modesty saved him from having his head turned. He was of too real value. But wearied by having to admire so many nonentities in close succession, I never realized till much later that here was real gold. I saw him continually, listened half bored to the praises I heard, I also at times let myself be charmed and delighted by his violin, but it was outside the walls of the palace that I came to know him really, and once he confessed to me that he had been often both hurt and astonished by my evident indifference and wondered why I hardly ever spoke to him. "You treated me as though I did not really exist."

I explained that I had imagined that he undividedly belonged to "the other side," which meant that unnatural atmosphere particular to Aunt's surroundings in which I was never at home, having always felt an outsider.

Aunt was most lovable when one could have her to oneself. She could be a wonderful companion and had a unique faculty for enjoyment. She was never *blasée*. Besides, she was so many-sided, so interesting, a real well of knowledge, one could learn so much from her, barring of course things practical! She also had a rare gift for making you feel welcome, but her charming naturalness vanished when there was a public to appraise her; she then played to the gallery, which made me excruciatingly shy and almost boorishly resentful.

In one's youth one makes no concessions, one is too hasty with one's criticism and condemnations. It is simply because one does not understand. All Anglo-Saxons have an instinctive horror of "showing off," and when Aunt "showed off" I became more tongue-tied and awkward than I really was, mostly out of opposition.

But in spite of the critical attitude of my youth, to-day I realize that I learnt much from the poet-queen. She was a splendid model of amiability, perfect manners and unselfishness. Aunt was always thinking of others, working for others, and if at times her kindness became stereotyped and her exclamations of pleasure or gratitude rather conventional, I learnt in turn, when official duties came to be my share, that the length of many years' throne service and the eternal repetition of certain duties, finally become almost mechanical, and one cannot every day of one's life find the same enthusiasm for the eternal old round.

Royalties, whenever they appear in public, have always to look attentive, interested, amiable. No matter what may be going on in their hearts, no matter if their heads ache, if they have had bad news, if they are tired or sad; the moment they are in public they belong to others, their real personalities are effaced, they are a prey to a thousand eyes. Their every expression is noted, criticized, discussed, also their looks for which they are held responsible. People forget that they are human. If shy, they are looked upon as awkward or proud, if they do their part too well they are dubbed actors. They can never satisfy everybody, so they simply smile. Their smile is in fact their shield, the armour

they put on as protection against all these looks that consume them, that try to pry into their innermost being, to discover their most hidden secrets. There may have been times when to be a king was an enviable position, it can hardly be called so to-day.

Once I was asked to write an article upon royalty. I did so with the sincerity of a real, live, feeling human being; by the way I was criticized, I realized that I had not been understood. We are not there to be understood, but as a butt for each man to sharpen his wit upon. Much is asked of us, we are eternally in the public eye, but for all the sentries on guard around our palaces we stand absolutely unprotected; each man has a right to criticize, nay even insult us, but we are not allowed to take up our own defence, to protest or to explain an attitude; there are no occasions on which we can publicly confess our faith; we are to sit dumb as though we had no feelings, no opinion and to suffer each man to make a grimace out of our face, lies out of our acts or words; we are to behave as though we had neither eyes nor ears, not even common sense.

We are accused of not being in touch with the man in the street, and yet when we try to get in touch with him that very man or his neighbour considers that we are descending unduly from the height upon which *he* set us, thereby losing our dignity. We are criticized if we stand aloof and equally so when we do not. When we are overamiable we are supposed to be "making ourselves cheap," if we are over-dignified it is said that we give ourselves airs. We are supposed to know everything, and yet each man who approaches us more intimately is looked upon as a favourite; jealousy immediately dogs his every step—why that man rather than another? Kings must have no friends; kings must be lonely and distant or they are not real kings.

It is said that kings never hear the truth, that they are surrounded by nothing but flatterers; this may have been so in the olden days, but my personal experience was that so much "truth" was brought to them, so many cruel criticisms about themselves, that it was a wonder they did not die of grief. A thankless task, but a proud and great one if they know how to bear the weight, to stand the solitude, and to forgive unto seventy times seven.

In contrast to the "big palace" with the wise King and the intellec-

tual Queen, our household was simple and rather uninteresting. My husband was not a man of showy qualities, he was exceedingly modest and seldom spoke his mind; he was the most loyal of Crown Princes, allowing himself no judgment of his own, grouping round him no party, no grumblers. He often suffered from the many restrictions laid upon us, but he never revolted, and if he criticized or complained it was only to me. He was a good and earnest soldier with the real German tradition of discipline; he was fond of his military duties and was happy amongst his soldiers and officers who loved and respected him.

I was the more disturbing element. My spirits were uncrushable, my health exceptional; I liked fine clothes, gay surroundings, fun, outdoor exercise. Always up and doing, I was continually inventing, desiring, hoping something. Considered very pretty, my face in itself attracted interest. There lay dormant in me those many possibilities and also dangers peculiar to women who are admired for their good looks. This gives glitter and excitement to existence, you are never overlooked; somehow the world reckons with you and a certain zest goes with you always, a latent sense of power. Fairly or unfairly you are to be counted with. Instinctively you feel this power even in youth when it is quite unreasoned, but nevertheless it is always there, part of you, your surest and most invincible ally. We were kept well under, we were to be allowed no ideas of our own importance, but in spite of suppression youth was ours, there were children in our nursery and we were the future that could not be ignored.

Riding played an enormous part in my life; to some this may appear trivial, but I had an instinctive sense of self-preservation. To me riding meant health, vigour, enjoyment, above all, it meant freedom outside the palace walls and contact with nature. On a horse I was liberated from chains and restrictions. I felt one with the ground I trod, one with the trees, the sky, the fields and those that till them. Riding taught me to love the Roumanian soil, allowed me to get into touch with the throb of the country's heart. Untrammelled I could reach out for its beauties, its different aspects, I could learn to understand it, first with my eyes, later with my soul. Absolutely indifferent to weather, I have thus taken possession of my adopted country by sun and moonshine, through wind and rain and stifling dust, over snow and slush, on



CAROL AND ELISABETH AS QUITE SMALL CHILDREN



THERE WERE CHILDREN IN MY HOUSE . . .



JUMPING A HURDLE AT SINAIA ON MY HUNTER "WHEATLAND"



AS COLONEL OF THE 4TH ROȘIORI

the wide plains and rugged mountains. My Roumania came to me on horseback; alone I discovered it, little by little we got into touch and finally we understood each other in spite of iron etiquette and court restriction, in spite of the ill-will of those who cared not for my young vitality, for my brave hopes and my dangerous conceptions of liberty.

In the saddle I was invincible: riding was my greatest accomplishment; it was a sport at which few could beat me and I confess that in this I was really ambitious. It was my pride to be able to ride horses that others could not master. I was more indefatigable and could stand more than the most trained cavalry officer. I soon got the reputation of being a hard rider, and it was quite unfairly said that I rode my horses to death; I loved them too much and my art in the saddle was too real to overtax the resistance of my mounts.

I admit that there was a touch of wildness about my riding; I had an adventurous spirit, as well as a romantic imagination; when on a horse I felt the world mine and the intense joy it gave me may have made me look more dashing than I really was.

One never can see oneself from the outside, but looking back to-day I understand that the way I liked to head a troop of officers, rushing them over any sort of ground, always leading, filling my followers with the ardour I myself felt, firing them with that keen joy of life which was my characteristic, must have sometimes attracted criticism. There was no harm in it, I was not "fast" in the real sense of the word, but my youth needed an outlet; also I hated to be beaten and took a sort of childish pride in being the first in every race. Nando condoned this, for although he often had to reprimand me for my indifference to appearances, for him too I was as a glass of champagne at a dull dinner. A less keen rider than myself, he nevertheless was generally of the party and enjoyed the fun, but not always without protest. He had a heavy hand and little patience with a restive horse, so I quite naturally became possessor of the mounts that were difficult to handle. This was my pride, and if ever there were times when I showed off, it was certainly when in the saddle.

In our youth we were not able to buy wonderful horses; we were kept very short, but those at the "Old Palace" occasionally condescended to give us their surplus and it was thus that I became possessor

of a chestnut mare called Sulina of which I was very fond and rode for years. Nando had been given a tall and fiery brown-black Trachener, Zimmer by name, but this animal soon fell to my share, for being difficult to handle he exasperated his master. Zimmer had to be ridden with an easy rein; when you pulled at his mouth he became a fiend, but he was just the sort of horse I needed when heading a troop of riders. Zimmer could never bear another horse in front of him, but felt the same glorious exultation as I did at being first.

Of course my wild cavalcades were not looked on with approval by the "Old Palace," but strangely enough in this I had my way. Riding was as necessary to me as eating and sleeping, and with a tenacity that, in looking back, I marvel at, I overcame all prejudice and objections and rode as much as I liked, and what was most astonishing, I actually rode alone without being followed even by a groom.

I suppose that already in those days of dependence I had a will of my own, and when relentlessly and pertinaciously pitted against authority I occasionally wore it down through sheer tenacity.

I do not think I was ever downright unpleasant. I was certainly wilful and what I desired I sued for impulsively, stormily, as though my very life depended upon it, but when I had got it I liked others to be glad with me, to rejoice over my victory and take part in my pleasure. Thus by degrees the objection against my riding subsided, to be gradually replaced by a certain goodwill towards this mania of mine which was finally understood to be harmless. And it came to pass that even those who had been the chief objectors began to like to see me on a horse, as I was so joyfully invincible when I looked down upon them from my heightened seat. The intense rapture I felt seemed to communicate itself to others, and they hazily realized that after all I was doing no one any harm, whilst the healthy exercise I took certainly seemed to agree with their future queen.

At first my people had harboured the queer notion that riding would prevent my having children, and above all else *this* was to be my chief function. Roumania desired a copious royal family, but they soon had to convince themselves that my passion for the horse did not prevent me from performing my family duties; I gave the country six children. They were not all born in close succession, but for all that, there were six!

Even *der Onkel* got accustomed to seeing me on a horse and would greet me with a kindly smile when I came riding towards him through the woods. In his steely make-up there was some corner which was in sympathy with this Anglo-Saxon girl whose will he could not break. He did not approve of me, I was a constant anxiety, but he liked me in spite of himself.

Uncle's tenderest passion was Sinaia and its magnificent forests. He was a good, though slow walker, and had himself staked out nearly every path in the wood. Nando and I sometimes helped him in this, it was quite exciting work. But I was too fond of being on horseback to care for walking, it was too slow a form of locomotion; but I shared Uncle's love of the forest, and he liked my appreciation of his walks, which I knew by heart. When we suddenly met each other, he on foot, a walking-stick under his arm, depressingly followed by two secret police, I proudly seated on my horse, we had a feeling of good-fellowship and his smile was one of real affection in which there lurked even a touch of amused pride.

The legend, dear to the hearts of our people, would have it that the King could never refuse anything to his dashing and unregenerate niece. This also was fiction, but at times, carried away by my indomitable high spirits, he relented from his over-severity and seemed in spite of himself to enjoy my buoyant youth.

At Sinaia I took to riding astride, it was safer in the mountains. One of my Russian admirers had sent me an authentic Cossack uniform, a dark blue caftan braided with silver over a scarlet underdress. I wore it with the silver *cartouchières* barring my chest, and round my then exceedingly slim waist the belt and silver inlaid dagger which belonged to it. This was in the days before women showed themselves in knickerbockers, and this Circassian dress, though somewhat startlingly unexpected, was perfectly suitable for a lady, and it never struck me that thus attired I might be considered an over-picturesque apparition.

In this array I would ramble over Uncle's roads, mounted on a wild Cossack horse Cousin Boris had sent me after his first visit to our mountain home, a horse that could climb like a goat; his appearance was wild, with long-flowing mane and tail, his manners were uncivilized but his sinews were of iron and many a year did he do me excellent

service. But I did not only ride on beaten tracks, but also on scarcely trodden paths, where the forest was most lonely. Neither the hardest climb nor the most precipitous descent did Cerkess refuse, sometimes almost sliding down on his haunches, sometimes straining every sinew so as to keep his footing during our steep ascents; thus did he dauntlessly carry me wherever I wished. Cerkess and I climbed up and down trails known only to wood-cutters; I have known the forest in all its grandest, wildest solitude, and alone I have stood on the mountain-tops, gazing down upon the world which lay below me like a painted picture. In every season have I known Sinaia's forest; in earliest spring carpeted with violets and anemones, the foliage of the beech trees so young that it was a yellow light overhead; I have known it in its dark summer shade, and especially was I familiar with its autumn glory, a fantastic world of burnished gold. I have also known it smothered in a pall of dazzling snow, but this was on foot, not on horseback.

The freedom my rides procured me kept alive my *joie de vivre* in spite of those who wanted to suppress my youth and curtail our happiness, in spite of severe German etiquette and the Chief Inquisitor's dark scheming; and when, gaily clad in my Cossack costume, mounted on my long-tailed horse, several dogs at my heels, I suddenly came upon Uncle, in spite of his official disapproval I perceived an involuntary look of appreciation in his eye. No doubt I was a worry to him, I perplexed his days, upset his ideas about what should or should not be, but I was young and meant no harm and I loved his forest.

"Schöner Tag, herzliches Wetter"—Uncle always talked of the weather, which was his continual preoccupation. "Ja Onkel, und ein so schöner Wald, kein Wald ist so grossartig als der Sinaia Wald," and Uncle was glad to hear praise of his beloved forest. I knew how to appreciate it, we each possessed it in our own way, I on horseback, he on foot.

"Wo bist du gewesen?"

"O überall es gibt so viele Wege."

"Ja, ja, aber sei vorsichtig, dein Pferd sieht ziemlich wild aus."

"Aber er klettert wie eine Gemse—Adieu Onkel!" and with a wave of my hand I would gallop off. I can almost swear that although he shook his head over my unconventional ways and reprehensible eccen-

tricities, *der Onkel* had at those moments a certain fondness for me in his heart.

It gave Nando pleasure to see me take an interest in his military occupations; he encouraged me to pay occasional visits to his barracks and he invited me to accompany him on many of his marches.

When we were first married he was serving in the Sinaia Chasseur Battalion, and it was in that dark brown uniform that he was most familiar to me, the uniform he had worn for our wedding. Later, when he was promoted to colonel, he was given command of a cavalry regiment, the 4th Roşiori, of which Uncle in an hour of weakness had made me honorary chief. This was a supreme concession on the part of the austere king, but as before mentioned there were moments when his fondness for me took the upper hand.

This was a great event in my young life, and it came to pass in the autumn of 1897, when my brother Alfred and cousin Boris were on a visit to us. This nomination was received with tremendous enthusiasm by officers and soldiers, and no end of joyful festivities took place, and the first time I reviewed my regiment was indeed a proud moment for me, and from that day onwards a strong and lasting link was forged between me and the dear Patru Roşiori.

In those days our hussars wore red tunics with black braiding and golden buttons, white trousers for full uniform and black for everyday wear. I, of course, had a uniform made and at all the parades I would proudly ride at the head of my regiment and it would have been difficult to say who was more elated, my soldiers or I. In my case, of course, the white or black trousers were modestly replaced by a skirt, but one of Uncle's fondest jokes was to ask me: "Bist du heute in weisse oder schwarze Hosen?" Uncle had few jokes and he always repeated them.

Close behind our palace of Cotroceni was a large exercising ground; it was either muddy, dusty or stone-hard, but I seldom missed a day when my regiment was out, no weather ever kept me at home. "The field of Cotroceni," though anything but attractive, was my sporting ground for over twenty years. My soldiers were always on the look-out for me and each time I galloped past them I was greeted with lusty

cheers. There was a giddy sort of exultation in this, difficult to describe if never experienced. Some spark of keen understanding and sympathy passed from me to them, a sort of electricity of which both sides were acutely conscious; it was life, it was hope, it was a world of strong possibilities.

I felt absolutely at home amongst our soldiers; I had the happy sensation that they accepted me unconditionally, without restraint. Nationality did not separate us, no reserves were made, I was not on approbation; I simply belonged to them, and when they saluted me they did so with perfect conviction.

I should perhaps not be the one to say this, but I owe it to them and to that unshakable loyalty they have always shown me. They were a unity I could count upon, loyal, uncriticizing, devoted. They admired me for my iron nerve on horseback, for my tirelessness and physical courage, but they also felt instinctively that staunch, fearless fidelity peculiar to my nature. We were happy in each other's company, amongst them I found a spontaneous allegiance not met with elsewhere.

I was *their* princess, my ways were not found fault with nor my privileges discussed, nor did it matter to them if the rights I appropriated to myself were absolutely orthodox or *protocolaires*. To me, the army seemed like a big and devoted family of which I was a specially welcome and honoured member. Unaccustomed to the ways of newly established countries, I secretly suffered from that want of spontaneous acceptance of my royal person which I encountered in Roumania. That spirit of censorious and almost hostile criticism was new to me, it was chilling; I did not understand it. My education and convictions had been so royal, in such an indisputably royal *milieu*, that I had no idea a new country needed to be slowly won by sheer hard work and by many renunciations. I thought I would be an accepted fact as I had been in England and Germany, where our rights had never been questioned; nor was I accustomed to the Latin spirit of irony and scepticism; my Anglo-Saxon naïveté was no arm against it, it cut into all my beliefs, shook my faith in the stability of things in general and often made me feel a poor shivering little outsider, incapable of coping with people of such vastly different ideas and education.

But in the army this spirit was not apparent, here each man saluted me as he saluted his flag; a warm feeling came over me, I was at home—and what more can one say than this?

Each morning when going out to their exercise ground my regiment had to pass Cotroceni, for after nearly three years we left the town palace for our own house, Cotroceni, situated on the outskirts of the town. It was surrounded by a large garden which was almost a park, and all the regiments had to pass alongside it to reach the field beyond. I used to hear the tramp of feet, the rumble of artillery, the clatter of horses' hoofs. So that I should know when it was my own Roșiori marching past, our band used to play a certain valse; it was its signal, a call to me, and I would dash up a small mound overlooking the road and thus daily have my own private little parade, especially in spring-time when we had early breakfast in the garden, so I was generally at hand when I heard the signal.

Whilst Nando commanded my Roșiori he had arranged that, three times a week, I should take part in the riding lessons he gave to his officers in their roomy riding-school. Although I hardly needed riding lessons the discipline was good for me and I thoroughly enjoyed them. The music played and I was a diligent pupil, although I was a better rider in the open than in the school, besides, I often confused right and left, which was humiliating. What I liked best was the hurdle-jumping at the end, which was performed to the sound of the same valse the band played whilst passing our garden.

It is with a feeling of emotion not unmingled with pathos that I look back on all this; it sounds so small and unimportant in the relating but I can still feel that particular thrill of happy elation when, after having ridden down the road between Cotroceni and the barracks, the *manège* doors were opened wide to let me enter, the officers all lined up in a row saluting. My horse was generally in a state of frisky excitement and there was a time when I was picturesquely followed by an enormous sand-coloured Newfoundland who waited for me outside and, the lesson over, would solemnly escort me home again.

I suppose I was young and foolish and later I learnt that many had considered me frivolous, but it was purely a case of high spirits, which

are irresistibly contagious, and a glorious capacity for taking pleasure in small things. I can only pity those who saw it all with the jaundiced eye of disapprobation; the loss is theirs, not mine.

All this proves, though, that I was not much of an intellectual in those days; I am not sure that I am one to-day, but I have, with time, become something of a thinker. It was, however, natural that Auntie rather looked down upon this impetuous niece whose pleasures were so exceedingly trivial. She was not shocked, but she could not understand my silly tastes.

In my defence let it be said that I had never been "out" before I became a matron, so there was an overdose of vitality which had to be worked off by degrees, and this would not be a complete record of my life if I did not pause awhile to describe these rather giddy but pleasurable years upon which I look back without a twinge of regret. I was still quite unripe, but I was also enviably innocent and trustful. I saw no evil in anything, nor did I imagine that others could do so.

It was in the winter and spring of 1897 that this *joie de vivre* period reached its height during a long visit Ducky, who was then Grand Duchess of Hesse, paid to us with her husband. Ernie could be the gayest of companions, he was in fact full of almost feverish life. There was something effervescent about him, rather restless even; he was highly strung and had the artistic temperament developed to the highest degree. He enjoyed everything and could also be a clever inventor of varied amusements. This was Ducky's first visit to Roumania as a married woman, and our joy at being together and sharing all things again, knew no bounds.

We were probably looked upon as two frivolous young ladies, and were no doubt severely criticized by those wiser and steadier than we were. But for both of us it was a period of magnificent enjoyment which the disapproval of others could not mar. There is a superb daring about youth, which is admirable in its way; barriers and obstacles only heighten the desire to overcome, break through and win.

To-day I have learnt that all periods of life are necessary for the forming of character and personality; joy is as indispensable as pain, but joy at the beginning ought to be stronger than pain, and those whose lives lie behind them must remember this and be glad when the

young are happy, even if their joy is taken a little wildly. Character, like all things, must evolve, it is useless to imagine that the experience of others can help, retard or hasten this evolution. At best it can steady it, be a brake at the hour of peril. Youth has to skirt dangers, burn its fingers, has to be tempted, perhaps even to fall so as finally to learn how to stand firm. The giddy period when pleasure is paramount has to be lived through, it is like spring storms before the calm of summer can set in. So in spite of frowns and criticisms, in spite of those who blamed or forbade, our youth had to break through.

Bucarest was gay: in those days people seemed to be well off, and there were certain houses where we were allowed to go to dance. These were carefully chosen by Uncle; we would never dare accept an invitation without his special consent. Strangely enough, he did not permit of our going to foreign legations; it was only much later that we obtained this concession. A pleasant set of acquaintances grouped themselves around us that winter and I was at last even permitted a few friends. Having visitors who had to be entertained, we were able to reach out towards a certain emancipation up to the present denied us. Besides, it is a well-known thing that shared joys are much greater. To have Ducky as a companion was unutterable happiness.

We both loved dancing and we had a gay winter. Ernie enjoyed himself as much as we did and, his vitality being infectious, he did Nando a lot of good. In his youth my husband had not the faculty of real enjoyment; he was too anxious and this gave him a somewhat protesting attitude that we did our best to overrule. The truth was he was too much in awe of Uncle; the fear of his "vetoes" was always with him, so he could never "let himself go" to complete enjoyment. Ernie, however, often helped him to overcome his inborn diffidence; the young brother-in-law, so to say, conquered Nando's doubts with his much greater self-assurance.

The chief event for us during that season was a costume ball we gave at Cotroceni. Ducky and I both appeared as "Princesse Lointaine," a personage out of one of Rostand's plays made famous by Sarah Bernhardt in her time. Quaintly enough, we had both chosen the same costume, although we had kept it secret from each other, with the only difference that hers was white with large pearly lilies worn

over the ears, and mine was made out of a black and gold Indian tissue and that instead of lilies I wore red roses.

We won complete success, but these long clinging gowns being difficult to dance in, before the cotillion we changed our costumes, and reappeared clad as sun and moon, Ducky being the moon and I the sun.

The old King and Queen generally graced our balls with their presence and Aunt, who could enjoy things with real zest, actually came dressed as Dante, wearing a long-flowing red-cloth garment. She was an astonishingly successful embodiment of the eternal poet, and taking her part seriously, she was not only dressed as Dante, but she moved through the room as though she had in truth been the great man come to life again. She did this admirably, but it somewhat disconcerted the young dancers who were at a loss how to play up to such an impressive personage. Uncle, of course, could not come in costume, but he made the tremendous concession of appearing in a "calaraş" uniform he had not worn since his young days. Uncle did not belong to those kings who were for ever changing their uniforms. Year in, year out, he could be seen in the sober black, red and gold of the infantry general which on festive occasions was smartened by the red ribbon of the Cross of Roumania, a pair of heavy unbecoming epaulettes and a white aigrette stuck in the front of his braided képi. Neither had Uncle's képi undergone the slightest transformation with the years. More "swell" officers had gradually widened its crown, but King Carol's head-gear always retained its original, rather tea-cup shape which differentiated him from other generals, as did also his strong square-toed boots. Uncle was not *un élégant*, all about him was sedate and somewhat solemn, there was no effort towards effect. It was his extraordinary quiet dignity which made of him an imposing figure, and those piercing, all-seeing eyes kept in leash even the most unruly.

The grave King, having donned cavalry uniform for his niece's costume ball, strengthened the legend that I could do anything I liked with him. He may have had moments when his frigid austerity melted somewhat before my impetuous ardour, but these moments, alas! were few and far between. But I *did* feel, however, that there were hours when that more human side of his rather enjoyed yielding to my high spirits. I was, no doubt, a somewhat refractory and unsubmitive member of his well-disciplined community, but though unruly he divined

that I was without guile and there was a healthy frankness about me occasionally disconcerting and certainly rarely found in his surroundings but which was instinctively sympathetic to his upright nature.

My language was "yea, yea" and "nay, nay," a great contrast to Carmen Sylva's flowery speech; Uncle was political but not false or wily; he was hard and straight; our two wills clashed, but we had an instinctive respect for each other based upon inner rectitude. With a certain amount of justice he considered me superficial, and I, in my youthful impatience, thought he took himself and everything else too seriously; to put it frankly, he often bored me, but we had a liking for each other all the same.

On this memorable evening Uncle greeted me with the words: "Heute habe *ich* die weissen Hosen an," and the black and golden Princesse Lointaine hugged him with real grateful affection.

The ball was a success; there were many good costumes of which I remember in particular Alexandra Cantacuzène (later Catargi) as Walküre, and Rada Văcărescu as Murat in a white and gold Empire uniform. He was very good-looking and was much admired.

In those days balls at Court were official functions; the mothers came with their daughters and everybody had taken the trouble to dress up, even the old ladies, and the Ministers, who also had to be invited, actually came in coloured *fraques*. I can still see portly old General Manu, Peter Carp, Take Ionescu, Marghiloman; even these important gentlemen had accepted the spirit of the evening and everybody seemed well amused. Only old Lascar Catargi, for if I rightly remember, we still had a Conservative Government in, came in sober black. These more weighty personages of course did **not** remain very long, and gradually the crowd thinned and we danced till our feet ached.

Ducky was so happy with us that she prolonged her stay right into the spring. She was as passionate a rider as I, and we were in the saddle nearly every day. Everything had to be shared as much as possible with our friends, and especially with the precious 4th Roșiori, of which all the officers, of course, became our very devoted slaves. We sisters "let ourselves go" in the exhilarating delight of being together and each day we invented something new. Our clothes also played a great part, we liked being as smart as possible; often we dressed alike

and were not above certain eccentricities of attire. Our pleasures were innocent enough, but being both of us rather "showy" we of course often laid ourselves open to severe criticism.

Having good figures with slim waists, we had, for instance, special riding habits made *tout d'une pièce*, very tight-fitting as though moulded to our bodies, worn with a leather belt round the middle. In warm weather we wore these habits in white drill and even our boots were white. It certainly looked smart.

In those pre-motor days, it was the great *chic* to drive on the "Chaussée," the Bucarest "high-life" promenade. There were many smart carriages and fine horses, and towards evening all the *élégantes* would drive up and down the long avenue in their very latest Paris toilettes, which were at that period showy with exceedingly ornate hats. The custom was to trot down the length of the Chaussée at a quick pace, which was really fast, as most of the horses were Russian trotters, coal-black with long-flowing tails. Only a few sophisticated exceptions, such as the Vernescus, had adopted more Western turn-outs with high-stepping roadsters who went at a normal pace. The way back was done at walking pace, so as to let the horses rest and to allow a mutual review of the ladies' smart dresses.

Ducky and I often took part in this late afternoon parade and would dress up in consequence, careful that our gowns, hats, cloaks or parasols should be in pleasant harmony. I remember certain black felt, boat-shaped hats we affected, with one long white and one long black plume. We called these the "Empress Eugénie hats"; they were decidedly becoming and accentuated the movement of bowing, for being, of course, much saluted, we had to keep bowing all the time. Every horse in Bucarest was known to us, and certain faces to which we could put no name were simply called Chaussée acquaintances. Some were, I believe, not particularly respectable, but we were not supposed to know this; their dresses were all the smarter, and as everybody bowed to us, these painted ladies did the same. To-day it is so much the fashion to paint and clothes have become so much simpler and so much more uniform, that the type, in those days very conspicuous, has almost entirely disappeared, but in 1897-98 these "professionals" were certainly quite a feature of our Eastern Bois de Boulogne.

Nando and Ernie also often drove out on the Chaussée. When our

carriages met, our husbands used politely to salute us and we answered with becoming grace.

Of course it was our pleasure to turn out as *chic* as possible: our victoria had the fashionable line, our horses were shiny, our harnesses smart, but the Prince's carriage had an advantage over ours; beside the coachman sat a green and silver-clad *chasseur* with long plumes flying from his bicorn hat, whilst we could only boast of a footman.

Frivolously inclined as we were during that giddy period, purposely exaggerating our affections, we began tormenting Nando to allow us to drive out with his *chasseur*. A great stickler for etiquette and prerogatives and strongly imbued with a solid Teuton belief of man's superiority over woman, Nando indignantly repudiated these demands, declaring it was only the male members of the royal family who had the right to a *chasseur*.

"But it looks so much smarter," we insisted: "why should your carriage be smarter than ours? It is quite dowdy to have a mere footman."

"You have your fine clothes," retorted my irate husband, "and leave unto Cæsar . . . etc." But this was just exactly what we did not intend to do, and thereby hangs a tale so absurd that it would be a pity not to relate it.

Uncle also had a *chasseur*; he was smaller and less good-looking than Nando's beplumed swell, but he *was* a *chasseur* for all that. He may even, being a king's *chasseur*, have worn more silver braid than the Prince's but I do not clearly remember if this was so or not, but even Uncle, though rarely, occasionally took a turn on the Chaussée.

Amongst our special friends and *dévoués* was a young officer up to any fun, fearless, amusing and enterprising. Although it was a grievous violation of military rules with the danger of impending punishment, we naughty sisters persuaded the rash young fellow to take off his uniform and don the livery of Uncle's *chasseur*, which somehow we had managed to get hold of. Ernie was in the plot and it fell to his share to get Nando to start out on their drive before we left the house, so that they should already be coming back up the Chaussée when we drove down. Our whole effect depended upon our meeting each other face to face. Our friend and Uncle's *chasseur* happened to be the same size, and though their faces were not alike, with the strap under his chin, the crowning glory of feathers waving about his head, his coun-

tenance was not of great importance; besides, Ducky and I had dressed as showily as possible so as to attract all attention away from the box to ourselves.

It was not without an uncomfortable sensation of guilt, however, that we started off, smiles glued to our faces, our Empress Eugénie hats doing their duty to the utmost, and thus, right through the Calea Victoriei, past "Capșa," past the palace to the Chaussée we sailed, the plume of our *chasseur* offensively conspicuous.

With our hearts in our mouths we finally perceived the rival *chasseur* coming towards us, his gay feathers fluttering above the crowd like wind-swept wings. Then came the excruciatingly exciting moment when our carriages met. Nando raised his hand to salute the King; he had a very special salute reserved only for the sovereign of the land, there was a particular *chic* about it, the old Potsdam *chic*, with a certain stiff turn of the neck, because who else but the King could be sitting behind that privileged livery?

As long as I live I shall never forget the expression of disgust, nor the frustrated gesture with which Nando lowered his hand when it suddenly dawned upon him that it was not Uncle he was saluting, and to what a shocking degree those two irrepressible sisters had transgressed against the rules of the family, annexing a privilege to which they had no right. Ernie had, I believe, a pretty bad time calming his irate brother-in-law, but he shyly persuaded him that nothing could better punish the delinquents than to ignore completely their crime. Nando heroically adhered to his attitude till we went to bed; it can easily be imagined what a scolding I was then given, but I have forgotten the scolding and the trick was worth the risk.

I can hardly believe that Uncle was not informed of our escapade, but he ignored it, which was the only thing to do; if he had begun to punish the transgressors our poor officer friend would have found himself in a sad plight, and I am afraid the two giddy sisters would have laughed on the wrong side of their faces.

Ducky and I also took great pleasure in hunting out the picturesque sides of Bucarest, the old parts of the town far away from fashionable traffic. We used to haunt the streets where there were queer little shops in which we found quaint objects in leather, pottery, wood and metal of

local workmanship. We often came back with our carriages piled high with these strange acquisitions at which the servants turned up their noses. Now that I had Ducky for a companion I could indulge in that suppressed desire to know Roumania more intimately from that side which made it so different from the Western countries to which we were accustomed. She took the same interest in it as I did, so that everything became worth while.

In quite hidden corners we discovered quaint old houses with wood-shingled roofs padded with great lumps of moss; we found half-for-saken old gardens and strangely solitary squares atrociously paved with round cobble-stones. We came upon wee churches of rare architecture and lonely-looking graveyards behind crumbling walls, and above all we loved the old stone crosses so unexpectedly met with at odd corners of the road.

A great attraction were the gipsy camps mostly to be found on the outskirts of the town. We would leave our carriage and penetrate undismayed among the tents, climbing over heaps of indescribable refuse, gazing about us full of interest but not without a shudder.

In a second we were surrounded and besieged by a tattered horde, loud in their insistence for alms. Naked little children, palms extended, would whine for pennies, repeating endlessly the same cry: "Cinci parale coconița," whilst impudently handsome girls, scantily draped in filthy rags, once bright, now discoloured, would laugh, arms akimbo, showing an enviable display of white teeth, strong as those of young wolves.

Bewildered, dazed, half attracted, half repelled, we had not eyes enough to grasp all the picturesqueness. But it was the old crones who fascinated us most. Each was the incarnation of some witch read about in childhood, familiar figures from tales we had loved and shuddered over. Crouching above mysterious black pots, standing motionless at the dark mouths of their tents, leaning on their staves, gazing with bleared eyes at visions of their own or coming slowly towards us through the dust, wrinkled, toothless, crooked, they were almost too good to be true. From their broad girdles wound several times round their lean loins hung the soothsayer's shell, and in their trembling hands they often held a greasy pack of cards. Fantastic figures, we could not tear our gaze from them; yes, witches every one of them, and our

not understanding what they were mumbling added to their mystery.

Noise and confusion, skinny dogs slinking about, dusty donkeys and lame, raw-boned horses, starved-looking animals, patient and long-suffering, nightmare creatures one almost hoped were not real, and moving as masters through all this confusion, fierce, dark-eyed men, hitting right and left with their sticks to keep a little order amongst their tribe.

Thinking of gipsies I always have the vision of a hundred extended hands, brown, slim-wristed, grasping, monkey-like, touching me from all sides, a regular forest of hands and ever that same whining cry of the children: "Cinci parale coconița, cinci parale, cinci parale. . . ."

Sights such as these we had certainly never seen either in England or Germany.

Motors did not exist in those days and I often drove Ducky out in a high-perched carriage drawn by two frisky Hungarian Juckers, over atrocious roads, to explore the villages round about Bucarest. These were mostly poor and straggling, but the more untidy and desolate they were the more they attracted us. We loved the wee houses with their over-large roofs heaped with maize-leaves, they looked so absurdly dishevelled; they too belonged to the fairy-tales of our childhood, one expected to see Hansel and Gretel stealing up towards the witch's hut. In spring we occasionally discovered clusters of double daffodils and periwinkle-blue hyacinths within the rickety enclosures, or here and there a peach-bush in glorious pink bloom. In the dun-coloured, neglected surroundings these flowers stood out like tiny miracles.

Spring has an incomparable fascination, and although when the snow melts, the Roumanian roads turn to rivers of liquid mud, I can never resist driving or riding out into the country so as to watch each small flower in turn bravely push its way through its winter covering. This fascination holds good, is the same to-day as it was in that blessed spring of 1897 when Ducky and I explored it together.

Riding picnics were one of our special entertainments when the dancing season was over. Ernie had left, but Ducky stayed on, loath to tear herself away from me and the surroundings become dear to her.

These picnics were sometimes arranged by us, sometimes by my regiment. The meet was either at the end of the Chaussée or in the Cotroceni court-yard according to the direction in which we were going.

I can still hear the impatient clatter of the horses' hoofs outside my window and feel the exquisite excitement of jumping into my saddle, gathering up my reins, ready for glorious adventure.

Either tea or lunch was sent on before us to some wood where a few non-riders would meet us by carriage. Few ladies rode with us, but Hélène Odobescu was a solid horsewoman and could keep up with our pace, also Mlle. Olga Catargi, a tall, slim girl with a long nose, and Nelly Wyndham, the younger daughter of the English Minister.

The Wyndhams were charming people. He was typically British with his fresh, ruddy complexion and his neat side-whiskers, closely cropped. He had an infectious laugh and an inquisitive nose which seemed to start quite unexpectedly from the middle of his jovial face. Lady Wyndham was a well-dressed woman, tall and dignified, which did not exclude a keen sense of humour, and she would occasionally lecture my sister and me when she considered we were being unnecessarily imprudent.

The officer highest in command under Nando's orders, in the 4th Roşiori, was a certain Colonel Bogdan. A more optimistic, amusing, cheerful cavalier cannot be imagined. He was in continual high spirits, nothing could squash him; and he somewhat softened Nando's severe German discipline. Ducky and I were very fond of him, he was always the life and soul of our rides and an excellent organizer. He took life with a smile, and was a real Latin in his conceptions of morality. Ladies played a great part in his life and occasionally this led him into trouble. I remember how once in my innocence I tried to admonish him, and it can well be imagined with how little result.

One of my best friends was Major Bassarabescu, an earnest man, very unlike his chief and whose career I followed step by step. To-day we are still close friends and love to remember those happy, irresponsible days when life was open before us, a glorious battle to win. We did not always win. Life was cruel to Bassarabescu, but I never lost sight of him.

I also see other faces: Major Mager, who rode a high-stepping chestnut I much admired and who later became Uncle's A.D.C.; Captain Cociu, who was the *ménagère* of the regiment; Jean Florescu, an excellent rider; Goe Odobescu, very young Prodan whom we used to call *la jeune fille* because he was so pink-and-white and beautifully man-

nered, and also "mad" Ressel, whom I still meet sometimes. We had *des petits noms* for each and were a set of good friends, loyal, happy and young.

One officer of my regiment, who had a great admiration for my sister, would occasionally decorate our saddles with garlands of flowers before we started; this both touched and embarrassed us, as we did not consider it looked sporting to ride with a flower-entwined saddle, but we had gracefully to accept this well-meant homage in which I had my share by ricochet.

Sometimes our rides took the form of paper-chases, and the final gallop when we tried to catch the "fox" was grand fun.

Often our gipsy-band, the "Lăutars," were sent out to the picnic-place which added to the festive atmosphere. The chief "Lăutar" of those days was called Ciolac. He was a real figure in our lives and in other lives also. He did anything he wanted with his violin. Ciolac existed till well after the War, and the last time I heard him play was at my daughter's wedding.

Nando always went with us, but I am afraid he did not enjoy the rides quite as much as we did; he objected to the pace we went; in his youth, in fact, he wasted much breath in protestations. But he liked being with his officers and I, who was *Stallmeister*, saw to it that he should have a quiet, powerful horse that would not try his temper. This paragon was found in a horse called Forward, which he rode for many years with pleasure, whilst I headed the cavalcades on impetuous Zimber.

Hélène Odobescu had a delightful old father, Colonel Odobescu, who wore long side-whiskers. He was all square and portly, had a dominating voice, an explosive laugh and a great love of horses. He rode a strange speckly chestnut with queer patches of white about his legs. All these details may seem trivial, but they make my pictures more vivid. Personally I like to know how a person looked, what a lady wore, what flowers were on the table or any quaint detail which singles out one man from another. The fun of life is observation. The comic, the sad, the beautiful, the strange, the pathetic, the absurd, it all serves to amuse the eye, to interest the mind, to move the heart. Man or beast, flower or landscape, event or sensation, laughter and tears, all is of interest for anyone who lives with his every faculty, and the man who

can only be stirred by great events, despising the interests every day offers, lives on the outside edge of life, not in its very heart. This at least is how *I* feel.

Looking back, everything rises again before me, nothing has been forgotten; neither the white patches on old Odobescu's horse, nor the sunset whilst we rode home, nor the different faces of my companions of yore, wrinkled to-day and marked by the passing years, some of them missing. I may have been gay and seemingly frivolous, but my high spirits never hindered me from going beneath the surface of things. I felt the undercurrents of the life that teemed around me: they all entered my subconsciousness, became a store of memories ready at any moment to spring up fresh and living.

It was only, much later, when I began using my pen that I realized what an unconscious observer I had been in my youth and how great was the store of knowledge hoarded up through the years; even those which outwardly appeared all lightness and effervescence, were years of learning when heart and soul were slowly forming. Nothing in life is without meaning. Years ripen man as the sun ripens the corn.

In my youth it never entered my head to try and write. For many years I was quite unable to take myself seriously or to imagine that I should ever be able to do anything really well except riding. I continued to imagine I was still the very ignorant girl who had started out from home at the age of seventeen with little knowledge and no accomplishments. Accustomed to be ruled by Mamma and her conceptions of life, her code still counted for me undisputedly. Although I struggled for freedom and for a certain measure of independence I felt myself of little account.

Once I said to Aunty: "I cannot get accustomed to taking myself seriously!" The old Queen's tragic eyes looked at me with an astonishment not unmixed with pity. "You do not take yourself seriously? *You*, the mother of several children? I took myself seriously at the age of three!"

Many years later I remember talking with my friend Elise Bratianu, a lady for whom I always had great respect and of whom I stood slightly in awe. She was asking me why I did not do a certain thing and I lightly answered, "Because I am not intelligent." My friend

turned and looked at me with her piercing eyes: "You have no right to say such a thing! You are full of intelligence but you are too lazy to use it; just try and see the things you could do, if you gave up being lazy!"

This tart admonishment made me think: Intelligent? Was I really intelligent? I had never seen myself in that light. It was a fresh point of view, it opened out quite new horizons, other possibilities. Intelligent? Supposing it were true? Elise said it with such authority. She also said I was lazy, too lazy to use my intelligence; lazy? Perhaps I was. . . .

This was characteristic of my attitude towards myself, I had not the least ambition to be clever.

The only "indoor" accomplishment I had was painting. Of course I was fond of reading, in several languages, but I found the greatest pleasure with my brush. Both Ducky and I, like several of the women of the English Royal Family, such as the Empress Frederick and Princess Louise, Duchess of Argyll, who were real artists, had talent for painting and drawing.

I had taken a few very good lessons with the same lady who had taught my mother-in-law, Ruth Mercier, a remarkable flower painter. Her technique for water colour was unique, as she expressed it: "Je peins à grande eau." Although I had her only once with me for six weeks, she gave me a solid foundation and I never forgot her principles; they were a firm basis during the years when I handled a brush. She was unique of her kind and her flowers were incomparable.

My love of colour and instinctive feeling for line was a great asset; I never worked enough so as to become a real artist, but what I did produce had a certain originality (and also, I believe, some strength, my drawing was good and I was undeniably *une coloriste*. Feeling that I would never have time to give myself up to more serious study, I developed my talent along certain lines with a tendency towards the decorative, acquiring a style of my own in which form and colour played the chief part. I had well understood Mercier's way of washing on colour in glorious quantities so that even when dry, my flowers kept a velvety depth true to nature and pleasing to the eye. In this I was an adept.

Ducky and I spent many happy hours painting together. In those

days I was perhaps the better painter of the two, but in later life she became a real artist, whilst I laid down the brush for the pen.

Aunt Elisabeth was always painting "books," elaborate *enluminures* on parchment, destined for churches. One of these is at Curtea de Argeş, in the church which has become her resting-place. It is a wonderful bit of work, most perfectly mounted and finished off. I also personally possess a beautiful little book she painted for me as a wedding gift, a wee little volume like the precious prayer books of old, offered to me in a priceless little casket copied from an ancient Byzantine reliquary. It is not a prayer book but contains poems specially written for a young bride starting out on her life's journey, poems Auntie wrote for the occasion. I dearly love this perfect little *objet d'art*.

Although we were not great admirers of Auntie's art as a painter, this idea of illuminating books was very attractive to us. We did not try to paint Bibles or to compose our own verses, but we decided each to paint a book for the other decorated with flowers and as text a selection of those poems and quotations most dear to us. At the age of twenty-two and twenty-three these were of course more sentimental than philosophical and well-dosed with *Weltschmerz*, for although we loved life and its gaieties we were acutely conscious of its tragic undercurrent.

These books were not only planned and promised but actually took form, and we still treasure them immensely. They are full of colour and originality and although no doubt faulty, still to-day I consider them artistically good.

Later I painted two more books, more important productions with an art which had become more *raffiné*, more studied and perhaps better understood; I had, so to say, learned to express myself.

My first book was painted on Japanese paper, but these later books were painted on precious parchment, each page framed in silver and the whole book cleverly mounted on hinges so that when opened the pages lay quite flat.

One of these books was painted for my great friend, Pauline Astor, as wedding present. Being a bridal offering I decided that I would paint white flowers only. The result was certainly uncommon and so that it should be absolutely perfect in every detail I had it bound in a

thick silver embroidery chosen from an old church design and studded over and over with moonstones. The general effect was deliciously pure and frosted; the book was in fact a great treasure.

I do not exactly know how Queen Alexandra came to see this book, but it so took hold of her imagination that each time I came to England, she insisted that Pauline should send the book so that she could look at it again and again. Of course I was happy and proud that this very dear aunt of mine should be such an enthusiastic admirer of my work.

The second of these more sophisticated books was painted for my husband. It was my biggest achievement and had been conceived with the idea of leaving something to the house which could not be carried off. I was never able to keep anything I painted, everything was carried off almost before it was dry.

This book was also done on parchment and mounted on the same principles as the other, only the pages had a different shape and the book was much fatter than the first, nor were the flowers restricted to any special colour. It took some time to do, but the result was satisfactory and to-day, now that I paint no more, we are all glad that this book exists as a memento of my abandoned art. Less poetically unique than the book Queen Alexandra loved, it has nevertheless been to several exhibitions and was given two gold medals, one in Munich before the War, and another in Barcelona in 1929.

Once Aunt Elisabeth asked me to collaborate with her in painting a Bible. I accepted and we worked at it diligently for about two years, then Aunty's enthusiasm ran out, so it was, alas! never finished. Though this work threw us a good deal together, it was not easy to collaborate with one whose taste and style differed so entirely from my own.

One could never be safe from surprises and these surprises were often equal to shocks.

Aunty's imagination ran away with her, and the results were occasionally startling.

It was difficult to get her to stick to one style. She would suddenly fall in love with a new idea quite indifferent as to whether it harmonized with what had gone before.

We started fair; I was to paint the flowers first and she to fill in text and design. Both her diligence and patience were admirable and often her inspirations really artistic, but she was too eclectic and had no sense of proportion. We were safe when she stuck to patterns and capital letters, but when she began on figures, the danger line was soon crossed.

The shocks received during this collaboration were many and some of them staggering, the worst being when Aunty suddenly jumped from water-colour to oils. Carmen Sylva handled oils with a heavy hand, besides, oil is always more aggressive than water-colour, and just fancy oil on parchment! Besides, who but Aunty, who saw things not as they were but as she desired to see them, would ever have hit upon the idea of changing from water-colour to oils in one and the same work?

I confess that this want of stability actually cost me tears. All my love of beauty revolted against this transgression of every rule of art.

To-day I often fondly finger the unfinished pages we painted together, there is a whole world of memories in them. But although I smile now when I think of the different phases of emotion I had to undergo, I still marvel at that extraordinary want of taste and sense of proportion which made Aunty suddenly turn from water-colour to oils. She also had a strange indifference to precision or conventional rules of tidiness. She never calculated what space she had at her disposal and would begin too big, suddenly discovering there was not room enough to continue in the same way, so she was obliged to crush in what still remained, just anyhow, magnificently indifferent to the size of the letters.

At one time everybody, from the Chief Inquisitor to the youngest amongst Aunty's adherents, had to sit as models for her different holy figures. The most unexpected personages were suddenly beatified; amongst others even Ion Kalinderu had to submit to this honour, and he graces one of our parchments as an elderly saint with a halo round his bald head. The portrait is astonishingly like, but I never understood exactly what saint he represented.

In her paintings Aunty used to the maximum the faculty she had of seeing things and people as they were not!

I too appear on one of the pages as the Virgin Mary in her early

days, but the child Jesus whom she painted beside me has a head larger than his mother's, for this also was one of Aunty's peculiarities—she was quite indifferent whether her figures had the same proportions, they were all crushed up together on one page and their sizes according to the space she had to dispose of.

But how she loved work! And she took all she did so seriously and everyone had to group around her and admire, admire incessantly and at all hours of the day.

But for all her artistic eccentricities, the Bible she painted for the Cathedral of Curtea de Argeş remains a wonderful and precious piece of work.

From the very first I was interested in Roumanian art and in art in Roumania, and soon after I had come to the country a group of young artists asked me to put myself at their head and form a *societă* which we called "*Tinerimea*" (Youth). We were the new generation going ahead, emancipating ourselves from the older schools, but we were not eccentrics. Luchian, Ștefan Popescu, Vermont, Verona, Loghi, Steriadi, Satmari, Strâmbulescu, Atachino, Petrașcu Stork, Späthe and others belonged to this new movement, and in those days of peaceful prosperity the annual opening of our exposition was a festive and social event when fine speeches were made and when we uttered mutual encouragement. I was even intrepid enough to exhibit some of my water-colours, which were sold for the benefit of the society. This created a strong link between us.

To-day most of the members of our *Tinerimea* have grown grey, a younger generation has sprung up with a newer and more startling school, the mentality of which slightly distresses me. I cannot, with the best will in the world, see things as they do; why must everything be as ugly as possible and look as though drawn by a child of three? Why must cows be blue and portraits so flat that they stick to their background, and all faces be khaki coloured; why must houses look as if they were tipsy and people have one eye and no nose? And why are tables drawn as though one looked down upon them from a gallery, and trees resemble worn-out broom-sticks upon giant sausages which have no resemblance to trunks? I really think that artists to-day try to see how far they can make fun of the public without its revolting.

I know that as Queen I have often declared that the hardest trials in my royal round were: listening to the complaints of the opposition and visiting ultra-modern picture exhibitions, when I had to smile upon an art which filled me with almost physical distress.

CHAPTER XVIII

ILLNESS: FERDINAND AND CAROL

IN the early summer of that same year of 1897 which had begun so gaily, we had to live through terrible anxiety. My husband caught a virulent form of typhoid fever and we very nearly lost him. Several times he was at death's door, as the original malady was aggravated by various serious complications, and it was finally double pneumonia which nearly carried him off. I remember how he was kept alive by injections of salt water in great quantities, which tortured, but finally saved the patient.

I no longer remember distinctly how long the illness lasted, but it seemed endless. Life around us stopped, there was only that one central, all-absorbing preoccupation of the sick-bed.

Three doctors were in constant attendance: Dr. Jean Catacuzène, Dr. Buicliu and Dr. Kremnitz, a German with a long brown beard, a very clever man and a personal friend of the King and Queen.

I knew little about illness and was no good as a sick nurse, but besides the three doctors, and a Roumanian sister, Nando was marvelously nursed by his old servant Neumann, and his somewhat older wife. These two were the type of servants to-day becoming rare, the type which lived and slaved for, loved and criticized the house they served.

This faithful couple had a single daughter whom they were bringing up in their traditions so that one day she should continue their work in the same spirit, and now that her parents have gone to the "Farther Shore" she is one of the pillars of the house, but *her* daughter, however, in spite of all her mother's training, has other ambitions more in keeping with the non-serving generation of to-day.

During the period of my husband's illness, Auntie was in a curious state of mind. Sickness had a strange effect upon her; it roused her

latent love of drama. Her imagination saw, and to a certain degree even revelled in, the tragedy that it would be if the young Crown Prince were to die.

The old King, a child of four becoming heir to the throne, a young widow, foolish, inexperienced, unworthy of bringing up her own children, and she, Carmen Sylva, as saviour, in her element, with large motherly gestures, sweeping the bereaved into her embrace. She imagined it all, she lived it through in thought, and as her thoughts became words, she, so to say, forced us to live it with her, for she spoke of nothing else. Each time she mounted the high Cotroceni stairs leaning upon the arm of a servant—and she came twice a day—it was as though for a funeral and the swish of her long robes over the carpets was pregnant with disaster. Her daily invasion was indeed “gorgeous tragedy in sceptred pall come sweeping by.”

She would settle down in one of my rooms, assembling around her as many women of the household as she could gather together, and then in a deep, grief-laden voice she would gloat over every tragic story of sickness or death that she or others had ever witnessed.

Curiously enough she was always hungry, so food had to be set before her at odd hours. I can still see her eating large ham sandwiches whilst she kept discoursing upon these lamentable subjects, for there were strange contrasts in Auntie and somehow this sandwich-eating was so little in keeping with the rest.

I confess that I fled from these meetings, to which the doctors were also bidden and whichever of the nurses was not on duty. I simply could not stand so much talk at a moment when my heart was on the rack. I preferred Uncle's stony calm. He was very kind to me during this terrible time and he no more than I could relieve his anxiety by words. But in spite of his kindness Uncle always remained the relentless upholder of outward appearances to which all sentiment had to be sacrificed. My mother, the moment she understood how serious was Nando's illness, proposed to come to me, but Uncle would not permit me to accept her offer for the reason that, none of Nando's family being able to come, it might make a bad impression in the country if a parent of mine hastened to my side and not one of the Hohenzollerns. This was very characteristic of King Carol. I considered it cruel, especially as Auntie was so terribly sure that I was in a short time to become a

widow. Uncle, however, could not prevent Ducky from coming back to be with me during my trouble, although it was but a short while ago that she had left us.

It was quite wonderful the way the people shared our anxiety. Cotroceni court-yard was daily filled by a dense but absolutely quiet crowd come to get news and to express their silent sympathy. In spite of the hundreds that collected beneath our windows not a sound was heard. Hidden behind a window curtain with beating heart, I would often watch this crowd; I felt grateful for their sympathy, but it heightened my anguish as more than anything else it made me realize how close we were to a catastrophe.

Aunty would occasionally go out on the balcony and with tragic face and finger on lip, pantomime the news to those waiting below. I could not bear to watch her, it hurt something within me, because I could not help feeling that unconsciously she was enjoying the drama of the situation. In moments of crisis the difference between our two natures was very marked.

Never shall I forget one terrible night when I was suddenly called to my husband's bedside, the doctors believing it was the end. I had only just gone to snatch a little rest after a day of great anxiety. I can still hear that sinister knock at the door, the voice calling me, feel how like an automaton I threw on my dressing-gown and entered the sick-room. Nando lay on his back, he was so thin that his body seemed one with his sheet. His face was livid and he was breathing with difficulty, eyes were wide open, glassy, but all the same, when I sank on my knees beside his bed instinctively his hand groped for mine. I closed my fingers gently over his, they were wet with perspiration; perspiration was pouring from him, our joined hands lay in a small pool of water. I had often heard speak of "death sweat," now I knew what it was!

As in a haze I saw all three doctors standing at the foot of the bed. They were quite still, their work was done, their human knowledge exhausted, the young prince was now in the hands of God. A priest was reading Latin prayers, his hushed droning voice fitted into the ghastly dream, also the sudden appearance of Uncle and Aunty who had also been summoned; her face was tragic, his careworn, and his shoulders were bent. Aunty was quite convinced that this was the end, she had always been expecting it, but I with my faith in life clung to hope; to

me the scene was all unreality, it was not possible that he should have to go so soon.

It was my faith which was destined to win through. This night brought a turn for the better, it was the crisis. Nando began to breathe more easily, one of the doctors bent over him, felt his pulse, a dawning look of hope came into his eyes . . . a change . . . but a change for the better! I dumbly gazed up into his face, he nodded his head. The tension of Uncle's face relaxed, the tragic line of Aunty's lips softened, the priest was crossing himself, he had closed his breviary. The angel of Death had passed. . . .

Yes, the wings of Death had not touched our house, but the Prince's convalescence was long and wearisome; he had several relapses and once the great Dr. Leiden was called in for a consultation. Roumanians, although they have excellent doctors, very much like calling in foreign medical aid. It was because of general insistence that Leiden was sent for. I cannot say I liked him. These great men, called upon suddenly, always seem to me a bit supercilious; they cannot have the same feeling for the patient as those who through long days of anxiety have trembled for his life.

Finally with innumerable precautions we were able to transport our invalid to Sinaia. It was the "Vânatöri" soldiers of his own battalion who carried him in a litter from the station up to the Foişor. I well remember that solemn procession, I walking beside the stretcher, Carol on one side, Elisabetha on the other hanging on to my hands, Uncle sedately trudging along with us.

It was an immense relief to get our invalid into the fresh vivifying mountain air, but for over six weeks he still lay in his bed, pale, exhausted, with a brown beard, terribly changed, with gaunt waxen face, sunken cheeks and skeleton-like hands. To me he seemed almost a stranger.

Ducky had to leave for Grandmamma Queen's Diamond Jubilee, to which Nando and I were also to have gone.

Summer dragged along slowly. Our two beloved little ones were my great consolation, we were much together. I taught them my love for flowers and we used to bring beautiful nosegays back to "Papa" who lay so patiently in his bed. The Sinaia wild flowers are beyond

words beautiful and Nando knew every one of them and all their names. I can still see his long white fingers touching them tenderly, like a friend.

A tragic and quite unforeseen incident happened in our house a little while after we had settled at Sinaia. Dr. Kremnitz, who was to remain with us till the Prince could be declared completely recovered, died one morning, quite suddenly, of heart failure. I had just been talking with him, we had even joked and he had told me to run out and take a little exercise, whilst he would go to his room for a rest, for he had a fatherly spirit and all three doctors knew that I too had been through a long strain. They had been immensely kind to me, understanding that this had been my first experience of mortal sickness. At home I had never known sickness; we had been spared these cruel experiences, this had been my initiation.

We found Dr. Kremnitz dead on his bed, fully dressed; it was a terrible shock and a real grief for Uncle and Auntie to whom he had been, for years, a close friend. Besides, the sad event had to be hidden from the invalid, who was still much too weak to sustain such emotion, and for a long while we had to keep him from finding out what had happened.

It was difficult to invent reasons for the sudden disappearance of the doctor he was so fond of, difficult also to prevent the news being brought to him unawares.

Dr. Kremnitz being a very big and tall man, and having died in his room on the second floor, it was exceedingly difficult to carry his body down the narrow stairs of our cottage-like house. Besides, in order that Nando should notice nothing of this lugubrious manœuvre, it had to be done during the night, in hushed silence.

Uncle was pleased to find that I did not lose my head and was somewhat surprised to discover how entirely I could be relied on in an emergency. I observed that I had suddenly gone up in his esteem. It was the first time he had put me on trial and I had not failed, nor had I complicated things by any show of feminine nerves or exaggerations.

Although I had no opinion of my intelligence, I had a firm belief in my strength; I had never had to call upon it, but I knew it was all there, that my courage would never fail me when needed. My perfect health gave me a reserve force lying dormant within me but which I instinc-

tively knew could be drawn upon when necessary. Besides, courage was fundamentally part of my creed.

A great ado was made when Frau Kremnitz, who had been abroad, arrived for her husband's funeral. Although Aunty had reason to dislike her, she received her as though one of the family.

These two women were strangely alike. Both were writers, both had their grey hair cut short, and deep-set, haunted eyes. Their speech was intense, vibrant; they were always listening to themselves, always seeing themselves the central figures of tremendous events.

In earlier days they had written a book together, in the form of an exchange of letters between two friends. The collaboration had been interesting, had no doubt for awhile united them in the same enthusiasm, but this was before my time, and I knew that to-day Aunty harboured no love in her heart for Frau Kremnitz. The breach had come, I believe, when Uncle asked Frau Kremnitz to help with his "Mémoires" instead of Aunty, herself a poet and writer.

From Uncle's point of view I understand that he did not feel he could use his too exuberant and romantic Queen for this sober and precise work, but the preference given to another rankled in Carmen Sylva's heart, and the doctor's wife is the only woman of whom I ever knew Aunty to be jealous. This did not however prevent her, when the moment came, from overwhelming her rival with sympathy and, what seemed to me, exaggerated affection.

I was none too agreeably impressed by Frau Kremnitz's airs and graces, so evidently a replica of the poet-queen, but on a smaller and, it must be confessed, more *mesquin* scale.

Aunty always remained a big figure, generous, warm-hearted and exceedingly aristocratic, whilst her imitator had a certain meanness about her, all her pretentious affectations could not efface her very bourgeois origin.

Later, this ingrained meanness became evident when she took a shabby revenge upon the royal lady who had once been her collaborator, by writing a stupid and, at the same time, somewhat vulgar novel which came out under the title "At the Court of Ragusa," in which, under cover of other names and places, she makes a parody of Aunty's eccentricities and an ill-natured description of her court and ways. Madame

Kremnitz, also under another name of course, plays the part of an intelligent woman who consoles the King, and repairs the Queen's blunders. A most despicable book.

With the death of Dr. Kremnitz, Dr. Romalo came into our lives, and was our house doctor to the end of his life.

Uncle and Auntie finally left for their yearly cure in Switzerland, and my mother and younger sister Beatrice, then still quite a *Backfisch*, came to stay with us.

Nando was still an invalid, but was allowed to leave his bed for a few hours during the day and would sit in the sunshine on the balcony, playing innumerable patiences or being carefully entertained, according to his strength, by the few people allowed to see him.

It was a supreme joy to have my mother and sister with me. Baby Bee, as we called her, was a delightful and intelligent companion and immensely enjoyed Sinaia and its beautiful forest. After the long strain my youthful spirits gained the upper hand again and I must admit that our riding assumed rather wild proportions. It was ecstasy to have a young and enterprising sister with me and occasionally all caution was forgotten, and I gave myself up wholeheartedly to the joy of rambling about the forest in all weathers, on every path, little caring how daring our excursions might appear to others.

Mamma, although strict and a tremendous critic, liked to see the young have a good time. She thought that they never could have enough exercise and nothing could rouse her indignation more than if we demurred about going out in the rain.

"It is ridiculous to remain at home because it rains ; people who allow their exercise to depend upon the weather, never take any exercise at all." Mamma's maxims were never wanting in conviction, and for a healthy young being who had been severely kept in leash, this sudden encouragement to give way to her natural impulses was like a door opening upon sunshine. Mamma volunteered to spend the time whilst we were out with our invalid, so we two sisters "let ourselves go" to the enchantment of the summer vacation. *Der Onkel's* weighty shadow was removed by absence, so it was Mamma who took over the reins into her own hands. The "Old Palace" was little in evidence. Castel Peles

seemed to be sleeping. None of its vigilance was abated, however, as I was later to learn to my cost.

All through life I was inconceivably careless about how my actions might appear to others, I never even thought of how things might look from outside. *Vivre et laisser vivre* was my motto; it never struck me that my high spirits could fill others with suspicion, nor that my actions could be misinterpreted, which they nearly always were. But high spirits are a dangerous possession for a royal lady as there come hours when everything is unimportant but the joy of the moment. Caution is thrown to the winds and the spirit of fun and mischief is allowed full sway, mostly with disastrous results, for all the world over there are jaundiced eyes ready to see things as they are not, ready to make mischief, to tear a reputation to pieces.

In fairness to all sides I must admit that prudence was not my speciality. I took others at their face-value, never suspecting them of guile, so it never entered my mind that any but the real interpretation could be given to my actions.

Who were those so eager to make trouble I never really discovered. I suppose the Chief Inquisitor was foremost amongst them, but even to-day I cannot understand what object they had in view. Could none of them remember that they had been young? Was my natural aspiration towards the pleasures of my age so much to be condemned? Perhaps there were some who understood me as I really was, but they never came to the fore and I must sadly state that my detractors were ever on my heels, never leaving me any peace or respite, so that I always paid a hundredfold for each smallest folly. Was there something particularly conspicuous about me that attracted criticism, jealousy? Was it because I was in a far land, *une Princesse Lointaine*, as I was often called in my youth? Others probably can explain this better than I, I could not see myself as others saw me. I never used subterfuges, everything I did, I did openly, I never tried to delude others. I was always of perfect good faith, genuinely desirous of making others happy, of spreading nothing but goodwill around me. But I was seldom met with the same spirit of generous, broad understanding. It was never my way to spy upon others or to interfere with what was no business of mine, I liked to see people happy and successful; but I have been spied upon

all through the days of my life, except the few short years when my husband was king. He had perfect faith in me and we allowed no treachery when together. We stood at the head of things.

Those who spy imagine they are being well-informed, little realizing how many lies are brought to them as truth. I loved humanity, I imagined that everyone was my friend, that joy bred joy, that trust awoke faith.

But, alas, this was not the case and whilst I was roaming through the forest, glad as a bird because of my young sister's company, enjoying to the full that glorious liberty Mamma allowed us, others sat in the dark, weaving webs in which to catch me and blight my happiness. They seemed to see wrong in everything, every one of our actions passing through their murky brains, became distorted and ugly. And yet I do not think that anyone really disliked me, some were genuinely attached to me, some gave me their wholehearted admiration, some would have willingly followed me to the ends of the earth. And yet all I did was found wrong, was criticized, disapproved of. I seemed to find no mercy, no understanding. Others lived their lives in a turbulent round of pleasure, no one seemed to think the worse of them for it, but although I saw few people, seldom went anywhere and none of the gaieties of the *grand monde* ever touched our defensive little court, although my life was one long suppression on the hard road of duty, it was all the same, I who was supposed to have fabulous adventures, to have astonished the world with my frivolity. Why, why? Still to-day I ask why?

Finally, Mamma left, Uncle and Auntie came back, the "Old Palace" came into full sway again, and that was the end of liberty and goodwill. Cousin Charly was also there and with her sweet soft voice eagerly helped to destroy.

The story of a life is too long to tell in every detail and even what at the time appeared to be shattering events, later (to use a German expression) *wenn man ausgelitten hat* seems to fit in like a puzzle; all trials and conflicts, every defeat or victory have their place, they are all just steps along the road of life. "One step at a time," as an old pioneer friend of mine used to say, "one step at a time, no man can do more than this."

Youth is wonderful, but it is also a tragedy, with its manifold hopes and delusions, with its insatiable hunger and longings, with its belief and doubting, with its urgent need of action, of self-expression, of ideals, of love.

A really alive human being is always running into difficulties, skirting dangers, coming up against closed doors and taboos. Like a turbulent stream in springtime, youth overflows; there is too much to hear, to feel, to see, to understand, to overcome. There are too many temptations, too many voices, too many discoveries to make; too many roads also, too many people, too many friends; too many who want all you can give.

Those who are tremendously alive rebel against restriction, the moment to them seems everything, they do not weigh consequences, nor count the cost; they go ahead, break through, want to get there, believe they can win.

I have known all these phases and because my life was too hemmed in, my revolts have been deep and painful. Once in these years of conflict I wrote a book of confessions which was destined for my people; I wanted to be understood. The book was to have been called "From My Heart to Theirs," but I never published it. War came and with it other ways of thinking and feeling, overwhelming events which shattered "all our yesterdays" and swept soul-conflicts away. We were up against stern and uncompromising reality, the days of romance were at an end.

Royal or not royal we are all equals before God, we are human beings, neither crown nor throne shields us from those passions and emotions peculiar to humanity. We stumble and fall, we cry out in pain or hope, we pursue illusions, we rejoice or lament, we climb, we aspire to greater heights, we believe in our strength in our rights, and have to discover our weakness, have to learn to bear our defeats and to begin all over again; and through the good days and the bad runs that eternal little thread of Hope—Hope that one day we shall touch our ideal.

When my husband was considered strong enough to travel we were sent to Nice, to Château Fabron, a house belonging to my mother. It was considered necessary that the Prince should spend a winter in the South, an unheard-of event in our lives tuned to duty and nothing

but duty, but before we left it was well impressed upon us that Nice was a place of perdition, that we were in no wise to imagine that we were going there to amuse ourselves, but purely for the sake of health.

We were given what were considered safe guardians, and these had orders to write daily reports about all our doings.

There would be much to say about some of those whom King Carol imposed upon our household at different periods of our life. They were certainly chosen with care and after *reifliches Ueberlegen* but much of the trouble and conflict which darkened our days had to do with these followers whom we treated as friends and who often, alas, all unknown to us, were used as spies and denouncers.

Perhaps the only thing which has shaken my belief in humanity is the incomprehensible cowardliness of most human beings before those who represent power.

Is loyalty really so difficult, is it so hard to keep faith? Is it so essential to be in at the kill? At first I did not understand this simple explanation of many of my misfortunes. Few were absolutely loyal; either out of fear or for the sake of self-interest, over and over again we were betrayed into the hands of power.

Power seems to be an irresistible magnet, nearly everyone wants to be on the side of power. Being all the days of my life something of a rebel, I never worshipped power, it always awoke in me a feeling of antagonism; I hate to see men behave as slaves, or merely as instruments; there is something degrading about it. I was never amongst the lion-hunters. I had genuine admiration for those who had made great names for themselves, but I was never irresistibly attracted to them nor had I any particular desire to sun myself in their glory. I approve of hero worship, we have need of great men for to-day as well as for history. The story of a country is made glorious by the names of its heroes. I am distressed when their faces are marred by those who cannot rest before they reduce all men to the same level. I remember my grief when I was told that William Tell probably never existed, that Joan of Arc was merely hysterical and that Shakespeare did not really write his plays. I do not wish to see either human beings or cathedrals pulled down, but nothing is sadder than to watch betrayals caused by

that desire to kow-tow to power, to the man of the moment. It is an ugly sight.

Nice enchanted us. We loved the sunny house, the garden, the flowers in full bloom all through the winter, the orange trees, the sea in the distance; we loved the illusion of freedom far from politics and daily restrictions. Little by little the Prince recovered his strength and the joy of our two children to be able to be out all day long knew no bounds.

As my kind old lady-in-waiting, Madame Grecianu, was in poor health, a young Roumanian girl had also been attached to me, and I had been allowed to take the Coburg family friend, Gretchen Gazert, with me, a concession Mamma had torn from Uncle much against his will. But Gretchen was a great comfort to me, I instinctively felt that here there could be no betrayal; besides, she was a link with the past, a bit of home; she was a safeguard against the unknown, she was not in the pay of the great. My little Roumanian on the other hand gave me many a shock. She used all her wits to throw sand in our eyes and to exploit to the utmost the giddy joys of Nice. Even the old trick of a sick aunt who had continually to be visited was successfully used, and in perfect good faith I would allow her endless free afternoons. She had huge dark eyes and the attitude of a *sainte n'y touche*. She took me in completely, so completely that I can almost laugh with her at myself, for indeed my credulity must have amused her immensely. But also my good old Madame Grecianu believed that this young person was all that she pretended to be, and also discovered too late what sort she was. Madame Grecianu had had a Swedish father, so she had some of the naïveté of those of the North. She was a profoundly sympathetic lady but easily offended, and not always quite easy for a young *ménage*. She was however absolutely loyal to me and loved me anxiously as she loved her own children.

Alas, I was to lose her much too soon, she died of cancer about two years later. Her memory has remained dear to me.

Little by little our virtuous intentions of living quite by ourselves, far from the frivolities of Nice, were somewhat defeated by the arrival of other members of the family. These, accustomed to come to Nice to

have a good time, had no understanding for Uncle's point of view, they laughed us out of our goody-goody attitude and we were invited here and there, made several new acquaintances and were even occasionally seen at Monte Carlo. Oh, not at the roulette tables, have no fear! but in the theatre where the very best troupes from Paris used to come and play. But in the *entr'actes* we would wander through the casino, staring with astonished eyes at the curious amalgam of humanity which pressed around the tables. I even once won 500 francs at *rouge et noir*, an old Italian gentleman having thrown a gold piece for me "for luck." This I was later reproached with a hundredfold and it was cooked up into no end of a row.

Neither Nando nor I had ever had anything to do with *le monde où l'on s'amuse*; this was our first initiation; we were like country cousins come up to town. This of course much amused our more sophisticated companions who tried to lead us into temptation, with small success, however, as Nando's principles were firmly stiffened by the thoughts of Uncle.

One thing though I could not resist and that was dress. In those days dress was much more ornate and elaborate than to-day, and my ideal was the dresses worn by the great actresses on the Parisian stage such as Jane Hading, Bartel, Granier, Vanda de Bonza, Marcelle Linde, and others, and with these as models before me, I allowed my imagination full sway, quite unconscious that I made myself occasionally over-conspicuous. I was very slim in those days, very fair and also very young, so naturally I did not pass unnoticed.

I would not have been a daughter of Eve if this had not given me a certain satisfaction. I felt all eyes following me, male as well as female, and it was not a disagreeable sensation. I remember with what care I combined a certain gown of flowing black *crêpe de Chine*, the front of which was embroidered stolewise with gold and turquoises; the sleeves were long, close-fitting and ran down in points on the hands. This was worn with a small black tricorne hat. Becoming, no doubt, but somewhat showy, I suppose, and I innocently trailed this too-effective gown through the notorious Monte Carlo halls of perdition, not quite without being noticed as can well be imagined.

But I was not long allowed to enjoy my un-*protocolaire* success. A terrible figure had risen upon our world, no other than that of Alex-

andrine Tolstoy, Mamma's one-time governess, "old Countess" with all her chins, her caustic speech and her twitching fingers, "old Countess" in the company of two elderly Russian aunts, they too somewhat under the sway of the weighty old pedagogue. I dutifully asked to pay my respects to my aunts and was invited to tea. I went without qualms, being very fond of all my Russian relations. I was however received somewhat as an erring sheep who needed to be brought back to the fold.

Alexandrine Tolstoy sat in judgment over me and my sins were brought before me one by one. Foremost amongst these was the unfortunate black and golden dress, also a certain pair of red leather shoes strapped Grecian-wise up my ankles, which it pleased me to wear when walking through the town. These red shoes it seems were a sure sign that I was hurrying towards perdition.

In these days even walking dresses were worn long and had to be held up in one hand, so you must not have visions of knee-short skirts and a generous display of calves, nothing of this; nevertheless, the red shoes were shocking.

Much abashed I sat there and tried to feel sorry for having thus transgressed against the rules of propriety. One of "old Countess's" expressions remained in my mind, for it was the first time I had heard it. She was preaching about a princess being overdressed: "Ce n'est pas aux princesses de porter des robes de ce genre, on m'a décrit votre toilette en détail, vous étiez du reste, me dit-on, très à votre avantage." That "très à votre avantage" took some of the sting out of the scolding, that, and some words of kindly comprehension said to me by one of the two aunts, Marussia of Baden (mother of the last Imperial Chancellor), who told me she understood that there was no guile in my imprudences, but that when young and pretty one had to be particularly careful as the world was very *médisant*. I loved her for her kindness, and although we were never destined to meet again, ever afterwards her memory was dear to me. I never forget a kind word; they are secret treasures I draw upon in dark days.

Later came the Carnival when Uncle and Aunt of Connaught lured us out of the Prefect's *tribune* where we were pompously installed amongst the officials, quite in the way King Carol would have approved. But the Duke and Duchess of Connaught, under the cover of their dominoes, threw confetti into our faces and hooted at us for being such

prigs. As can be imagined we not unwillingly descended from our seats of honour, and having been given masks and dominoes found ourselves suddenly the centre of a gay group, whirled away into a crowd of laughing, jostling, dancing humanity.

There was also a battle of flowers when I turned my victoria into a bower of orange branches heavy with golden fruit. All dressed in white, I sat within its shade, accompanied by two of the young Festetics girls, May and Alix, distant cousins of my husband through their grandmother, who had been a princess of Baden. We were very fond of each other and these two pretty girls looked upon me as a dispenser of joy and the days passed in my company were termed "glorious days." Later, May married Prince Carl of Fürstenberg and life still brought us occasionally together, but I quite lost sight of Alix.

There was also Cousin Boris, my faithful admirer, and the yacht of the Mazzarinis and the Xantos and visits to Cannes, all this in a company that Uncle would certainly have considered too gay, but being led on step by step by our relations it was not always possible to stand aside merely as lookers-on. Accustomed to amuse themselves, they could not understand why, young as we were, all this was to be taboo for us. We even actually went to a *bal masqué* where everybody was to be dressed in white. Please do not imagine that we were masked or that we joined the crowd, oh no! we sat in a box, but nevertheless I was costumed as "Princess Lointaine," a long clinging white dress, long white veil and lilies over my ears and had my own little success. But all our poor little frivolities were carefully noted by the spies specially attached to our heels, and were then passed on to Uncle to brood over to his heart's content.

Uncle, who had been a friend of Napoleon III, was very much on his guard in his attitude towards republican France, and it was rather against his will that he allowed us to go to Nice, for he always looked upon France as a country of dangerous frivolities; besides, he did not really admit republics, and for him a president was not on the same level as a king, whatever importance his country might have, and he greatly demurred as to whether he could allow my husband to pay a visit to Félix Faure, then the French president, who was visiting Nice. According to Uncle this was a concession he was not in sympathy with; the

idea of a Crown Prince paying the first visit to a president went against the grain. To-day this makes us smile, but I remember the weighty *pour-parlers* there were at the time. Finally it was agreed that the Prince should pay the first visit on condition that M. Faure should, the same day, come to pay his respects to me. M. Faure was a fine-looking old gentleman, tall, with a large white moustache; he had in fact almost the air of an aristocrat. Our conversation, however, was, I suppose, quite uninteresting, a conventional exchange of amiabilities. Nando was always very shy and I, in those days, had no idea of politics and I can imagine that I did not find much to say to the important old gentleman.

On the way home to Roumania we stopped a few days at Florence to visit my mother-in-law. One mass of flowers, Florence in May was a revelation. I loved its every stone, and as the man who showed us round was deeply imbued with its charm he was able to communicate his emotion to us, so that each church, picture, monument, street corner or view took on a special value. Unforgettable has remained a visit to Fiesoli, and that marvellous view looking down upon the town, with the solemn cypresses rising monumentally above a mass of tender spring green. The tulips, irises, narcissi and roses sold at every street corner were pure ecstasy.

Then came Venice for three days, a dream of beauty, but as it was our last *étape* before returning to servitude, a heavy melancholy pervaded that first initiation to the "Pearl of the Adriatic." Besides, Gretchen and I were to part here, my gentle but staunch ally was to be taken from me. I am sorry to have to confess that, returning to Roumania in those days was like returning to prison—but that was long ago.

On our return, my husband, now quite recovered, took up his military duties again, and I was supposed to settle down and be a good and dutiful little princess, without any imagination, tamely acquiescent to the severe King's every behest. This, alas, was not entirely my ideal, and there followed still many a year of conflict and even periods of danger when everything might have been wrecked. There was an astonishing want of comprehension on all sides, and many intrigues and, alas, more than enough of those who went out of their way to do harm instead of good, to stir up strife instead of promoting peace.

One unforgivable mistake was made in these days which brought with it endless misery.

True to his habit of complicating even the smallest family matter, turning it into a state affair, Uncle ponderously set about finding a governess for Carol, then about seven years old. Uncle's special method of cowing us was to do everything in the name of his Government; whenever a disagreeable restriction or vexatious concession was to be imposed on our young and much tyrannized household, he would do so in the name of Public Opinion and his consecutive Ministers were used in turns as bugbears, so that during all my youth the expression "Minister" was synonymous with "kill-joy"; they represented for me a special sect whose object was to suppress all good things, to interfere with our every liberty, and make of life in general an intolerable nuisance, instead of a pleasant journey through sunny places. Taken as single human beings they seemed kindly enough, quite human in fact, almost friends, but when Uncle took their names in vain they became almost objects of terror, anyhow of weariness and suppression.

This selecting of a governess for our son was an occasion for Uncle to use all his batteries. He began by declaring that never would Roumania accept a foreign pedagogue who had not already educated a king or a queen, that it was therefore quite impossible for my husband or for me to have any hand in the choice. He alone was capable of finding this unique treasure, that he had in fact already found her and that he expected us to agree with his choice—an Englishwoman who had brought up the Queen of Holland and who was a great friend of the Wied family.

I immediately understood what this would mean; it would mean a spy, if not an enemy in the camp, one receiving orders from the "big palace," one who would be in league with the Grand Inquisitor and all my persecutors; the thought was intolerable, it was a threat against the peace of our poor little household.

However, for the sake of my husband, who was being much pressed, in spite of the objections I had put up, in spite of having my own candidate in the form of a kindly and pleasant woman I had known in England and whom my father liked and trusted, I agreed to see the person in question on condition that, if I did not like her, I would have the right to say so, and that then the project would be dropped. The pos-

sibility existed that I might like their choice, and then all would be well.

The lady in question was brought to Sinaia for inspection, was received at Castel Peleş with open arms and many signs of affection, but the moment I set eyes on her all hope vanished. I understood that my worst fears had been realized. The woman was just everything that could not be borne, thick-set, heavy with staring, goggle-eyes, a large fleshy nose and repulsive mouth; she was common, with a commonness that only one of her own nationality could rightly appreciate. Also her speech was common and throaty, her expressions were second-rate, unrefined. In schoolboy language she was a "perfect terror." The very sight of her was a shock and her speech completed the repellent exterior.

I tried to explain that there was no ill-will in my feeling of repulsion, that I had hoped she would be acceptable, but for the peace of the future I must declare that it would be impossible for me to live with a woman of this kind, especially in the capacity of mentor of our son, that it would be a cruel mistake to impose upon me a person who from the very first was blood-curdlingly unsympathetic.

I tried to make my husband see that if he accepted he would be introducing misfortune into our home, I knew that he was being coerced, but better put up a fight now at once rather than accept a situation which was intolerable—that could only spell disaster in the end. Instinctively the Prince agreed with me; he too disliked the look of the woman, but he was torn between his natural instinct and his desire to avoid strife by complying with his uncle's wishes. Unfortunately, when young one is over-emphatic, one uses exaggerated expressions, one is too stormy in one's likes and dislikes; we of our family were inclined to exaggeration of language, our adjectives were varied, profuse and incisive, so instead of being convincing, the overdrastic expressions of my protest were looked upon as caprice and although at heart with me, Nando finally allowed himself to be persuaded by those in power; he gave in, and the unwelcome personage became one of our household, and into the bargain one who occupied an important position.

That day I had a good weep on old Green's ample bosom.

In spite of the instinctive horror I had of Miss W., I nevertheless set about trying to make the best of a bad job. But not so Miss W. She knew that she had protection from a higher authority and, from the first, I felt her hostility towards me, which cropped up at every turn.

Certainly I was still very young and had much to learn, but my maternal instincts were exceedingly strong; I adored my children and it was a fundamental mistake to force upon us one who took orders from those in higher power. This was indeed putting a finger between the bark and the tree; besides, it was the destruction of our family happiness, as Miss W. from the first set about alienating our child from us, criticizing all we did or left undone and making continual reports to the "palace" against us, though we only discovered this later on. From the very first day she was overbearing, interfering and impertinent, and I could never get at my own child without scenes and explanations. In all things she referred to the "old court" and treated both my husband and me as though we also needed to be educated. I think she must have had an evil mind, because later, when I heard all that she had said against us, I was aghast.

I will not relate all the misery of her two years' reign; it was the blackest period of my youth, engendering endless misery and grief and even to-day, although it is all so long, long ago, I cannot look back upon it with calm.

It ended in Carol having typhoid fever in the autumn of the second year; he nearly died. I had been abroad with my mother as the woman had made my house intolerable to me, but I hurried back and Miss W. resented my return as an intrusion.

I remember a dreadful night when, seated on a low chair beside the boy's bed, my enemy came in, and looking at me with her protruding, ogre-like eyes, brutally asked "if I realized the situation?" meaning that the doctors had given the child up. I looked up sadly into her ugly, unloving face and answered what many have answered before: "Whilst there is life there is hope," and I remember wondering how there could be such monsters on earth.

That night was the crisis. Carol did not die, but like his father he had a long and difficult convalescence, made unbearable by the presence of the woman of whom no one could deliver me; besides, it was two months before the birth of my third child.

In those dismal November days old Green was my only consolation, old Green and my little Elisabetha, a lovely solemn-faced child who, even at that early age, had a strong sense of rectitude. I was also great friends with the Roumanian "sister" who nursed Carol and whom, for

some reason, we called Lisica although it was not her name. Lisica liked fun and good living, she enjoyed the food in our house and was always smiling; she relieved the melancholy of the sick-room.

But in Castel Peleş sat Cousin Charly firmly enthroned as Uncle's favourite and her gentle voice added many a whisper against "poor Missy," who was eternally in disgrace.

I used to predict that this third child I was carrying would be a child of tears, because in those days there was not a night that I did not weep myself to sleep, but my previsions were wrong. When my little daughter was born in Gotha on January the 9th, 1900, she was from her first day a child of joy and sunshine, for these miracles do come to pass. Gay, smiling and astonishingly loving from her tenderest infancy, she was more than a consolation, she was a revelation, and I loved her with a love difficult to describe; I could not let her out of my sight, she was a message of peace and hope.

We christened her Marie after my mother and her mother before her, but we called her Mignon and this name has stuck to her for ever. To us all she is and always will be Mignon, only Mignon.

Mamma, knowing the acute torture and humiliation it was for me to live under the same roof as my sworn enemy, had obtained permission for me to come to her for my confinement, and this is why Mignon was born in Gotha. This period of peace and love after all the turmoil, strife and sadness at home was like a rebirth, and the blessed and healthy kindness of my mother, her understanding and the courage with which she fought for me, remains unforgettable to me for all the days of my life.

My stay at Gotha was prolonged right into the spring, because an agreement had at last been come to that Miss W. should depart before I returned to Roumania, but as both Uncle and Aunty clung to their favourite, it took a long time before they could resign themselves to letting her go. During all these months I was separated from Carol, but Elisabetha was with me and she looked with grave astonishment at the new little sister who had come into her life.

We loved the great Gotha Schloss, a huge building the shape of a square horse-shoe overlooking the town from a height, with an enor-

mous inner court-yard. My parents inhabited only one floor of this castle, which they had delightfully arranged with fine old furniture and splendid carpets and rugs. There was a central *Saal* or huge living-room, and here we would all assemble to work, mostly at wood-carving and wood-burning then so much the fashion, but we also painted and embroidered; it was a blissful, harmonious and busy family life. My youngest sister, Beatrice, was growing up. She was exceedingly intelligent and the most delightful and amusing companion, we were great friends; also Ducky came from Darmstadt and Sandra from Langenburg. The *Schloss* had room for many, and there was also Gretchen Gazert, everybody's friend and chief amongst the workers, "Gretchen für alles" as we called her, patient, self-sacrificing, good-humoured, a born helper and peacemaker, a lovable, gentle, fair young girl whose fate intermingled with ours all through life.

Yes, we loved the Gotha Schloss, but the year before a great grief had come to us there; the death of our only brother Alfred. We had all assembled for our parents' silver wedding, many guests had come, Uncle Alexis, Uncle Serge, beautiful Aunt Ella and others. Several festivities had to be given, but Alfred was ill, Alfred was unable to take part in anything. He lay pale and emaciated in one of the rooms on the lower floor, his young life wasting away. Soon after he was taken to Meran, but we did not go with him. Whether my parents guessed he was so near his end I do not know, we sisters certainly did not, and his death soon afterwards was a staggering blow. We were all so healthy, so strong, illness was an unknown thing in our family, and now Alfred was gone, Alfred our eldest, the only son, making the first gap in our ranks.

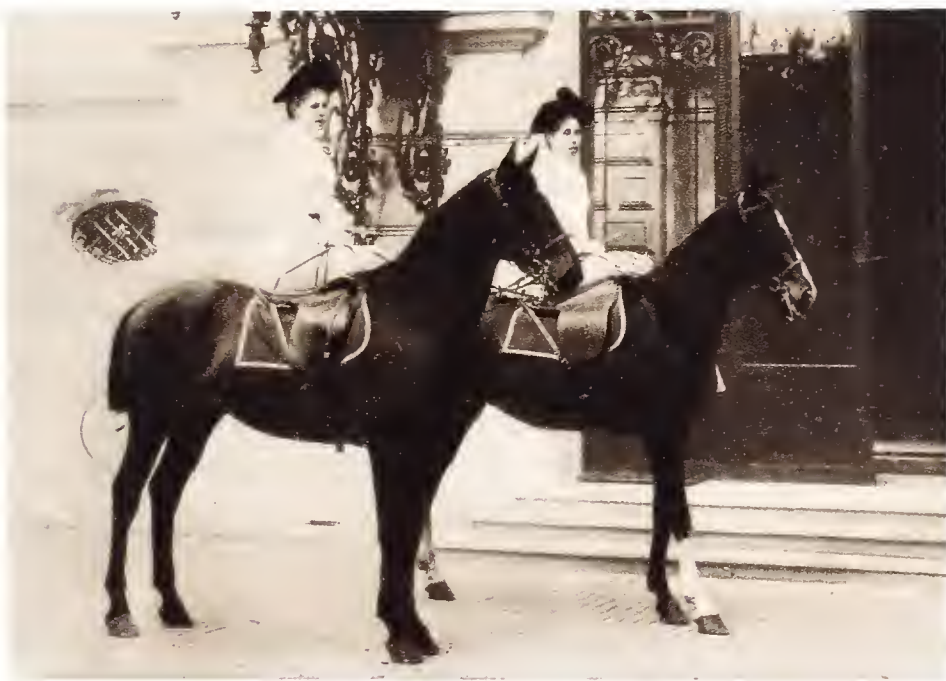
He had died all alone at Meran; only his French tutor and faithful Rose had been with him. It was unbearable to think that he had died all alone.

Never shall I forget the day his body was brought back to Gotha. We were with Mamma in her room, all of us dressed in deepest mourning, waiting for the funeral procession to enter the castle court-yard.

All of a sudden the church bells of Gotha began ringing and we heard the muffled tones of a funeral march, and Mamma, generally so sober of movement, so undemonstrative, sank to her knees, crossing herself many times and then burst into tears. Mamma! Mamma who



RIDING SOME FAVORITE HORSES ON THE FIELD AT COTROCENI



RIDING WITH "DUCKY" IN 1897



"MIGNON" AMONGST THE PEONIES TO WHICH I ALWAYS COMPARED
HER (SNAPSHOT TAKEN BY MYSELF)



COUSIN CHARLY; THE PRINCESS OF
SAXE-MEININGEN

always hid away every emotion ; it was an overwhelming sight ; Mamma weeping for her first-born. We all of us went down upon our knees beside her, whilst the bells seemed to be ringing in our heads and our hearts.

It was in April, I think, that I had at last to tear myself away from Gotha and all those of the beloved family circle to join my husband and Uncle and Aunty at Abbazia, whither they had brought Carol in the company of a new governess ; the fatal Miss W. had finally been relinquished, but not without endless and painful debates. Mamma had won the day, but from then onwards she and Uncle were only on polite, but never more on really friendly terms.

The new governess, a certain Miss ffoliet of Irish origin, was the exact opposite of her forerunner ; she was long, thin, rather shy, very ladylike and unassuming. Exceedingly shortsighted, she had a somewhat vague and watery look and gave a very limp hand in greeting, but I liked her. Even now we had not been allowed to choose for ourselves, but this new addition to our household was acceptable to us all. How the King had overcome the difficulty that Miss ffoliet had never educated either king or queen, I cannot say, for we were allowed to make no inquiries, we merely had to accept the royal decrees.

Nando was anxious about how I would fit in with the new authority, but I was only too desirous of peace ; I never cared for trouble and strife, nor was I ever the one to start a quarrel. I never understood why people needed to be nasty or unkind to each other, but some situations are simply intolerable. It is no good expecting the impossible, Miss W. belonged to that which was impossible ; we had to be delivered from this soul-destroying bondage.

It would not be strictly adhering to truth if I gave you to understand that with the coming of Miss ffoliet all strife, trouble and persecutions came to an end, this would have been asking too much of a world run by human beings, but a certain peace and goodwill was re-established and both sides learnt gradually the secret of give-and-take.

Mignon was an adorable addition to our family ; a sweeter, happier, fairer child cannot be imagined. I always compared her to those large, sweet-scented, pink peonies, mother-of-pearl coloured, cool to the touch, which impart an exquisite freshness to the atmosphere of a room.

Mignon in her way was all this; her hair was flaxen and curly, her complexion that of a pale pink shell, she had the real cupid's bow mouth and long-shaped, rather sleepy eyes, under well-marked eyebrows and long lashes, both of a much darker shade than her hair. Nothing ever disturbed Mignon's placid good-humour, to me she was pure joy. Elisabetha was much more classically beautiful, but was always a solemn, rather austere silent child, unable to express her feelings; besides, Mignon had come as a ray of light into great darkness, at an hour when I had lost faith in life. Mignon was one of those luminous bridges back to hope which are given to us occasionally, and Mignon unstintedly responded to my love.

CHAPTER XIX

KING CAROL'S ADVISERS

THESE are in no way political reminiscences, but as King Carol was one of the politicians of his day and as from the age of seventeen upwards the atmosphere I lived in was saturated with politics, I feel that the picture of my life would not be accurate if I did not give a few sketches of those with whom Uncle worked, describing some of the "Ministers" he used as dampers to our youth.

In Roumania politics are bitter. They are pursued with Latin ardour, party feeling is intensely violent and to Anglo-Saxon conceptions the language used one against the other in Parliament, in the Press, as well as in general conversation, is, to say the least, somewhat bewildering.

In Uncle's time there were two definite parties, the Conservatives and the Liberals, though there was a tendency to a split amongst the Conservatives, a section of which called themselves Junimea. My husband had good friends amongst these.

As mentioned before, at the time of our marriage the Conservatives were in power under Lascar Catargi, an earnest, straightforward, level-headed old gentleman of Moldavian origin and with a Moldavian accent, whose calm deliberation was backed by quiet and unemotional common sense. His wife, a worthy elderly lady, had no beauty, her nose having an unfair share of her face; but she was motherly if not entertaining. When her husband was in power she made efforts at elegance and I well remember how at a court ball she and I appeared one evening in similar dresses, an *Eau de Nil* creation of Spitzer's, with the only difference that, our ages and appearance being vastly dissimilar, it did not suit us in the same way. This worthy couple, however, passed away in my early youth, so that it was not for long that our paths converged.

Demetre Sturdza, chief of the Liberals, lasted much longer and

played a greater part in my life; he was one of those most largely used as a bugbear and in his case I believe *der Onkel* did not need to take his name in vain. Demetre Sturdza really was a conscientious objector. Dry-grey, passionate, he was a small, intense little man, a great sectarian and as quarrelsome as a terrier, but an exceedingly clever and worthy gentleman. A peculiarity which caricaturists joyfully seized upon was a perennial tear in one of his eyes; I have never seen him without this tear. It has even on occasions given me false hopes as to his capacity of feeling. I innocently imagined that this tear had something to do with the feeling of emotion evoked when I had to plead with him, but the tear, alas, although I cannot exactly call it a political tear, had nothing to do with emotion but only with a too prolific lachrymal gland.

A real chief to his party, Demetre Sturdza was both feared and respected; Uncle had a high opinion of him, and his wife, who was a Cantacuzène, eldest daughter of the pleasant old lady who had been present at my wedding, had by far the sharpest tongue in Roumania. She was the wit of the party, but the milk of human kindness did not run through her veins. Her *bon mots* were sensational, but left little of the one on whom she sharpened her humour. She too was small and dry and being generally in ill-health, was deathly pale; she was usually more feared than liked; I do not think that I always found favour in her eyes.

In general we had a less good time when the Liberals were in power, they were more deadly in earnest, more unforgiving, more critical; with the Liberals at his elbow King Carol became *ein sehr unbequemer Herr*. I must be forgiven for expressing myself occasionally in German when speaking of Uncle; his education and conceptions were so characteristically German that this caustic language instinctively comes to my tongue when thinking of him. Sturdza had also studied in Germany, so the two men were of one mentality and a rather terrible force when banded together against you. I have occasionally been up against them and the bruises received were pretty painful.

I cannot help feeling that the Conservatives were more easy-going. They were more often to be met in society than the Liberals; our contact with them was, so to say, less strictly professional, they admitted some play as well as work. Not so the Liberals; with them all was grim

earnest at all seasons and at all hours of the day. It was for this reason, I suppose, that they gradually got the upper hand and wielded power more often and for longer periods than the Conservatives. In later years, when I was myself in harness, I mostly worked with the Liberals, but in my youth they certainly did not represent the easy side of life.

As is the way of the passing generation, to-day I regret the disappearance of those hard masters of yesterday; they were difficult to get on with, but there was iron in them. They knew only too well how to say "no," but when it was "yes" they stood by that "yes" and you felt you had a solid background. To-day we are in a state of transition, and are we not ever inclined to regret the "good old times" which we did not always entirely enjoy whilst they were in force?

But it was many a year before I learnt to appreciate the pith that lay at the core of the Liberals; when young, I preferred having the Conservatives in power, they appeared to be more lenient, also less exigent.

I do not in the least feel myself justified either in judging or criticizing those who were the political leaders of my country; my appreciations could easily be considered too feminine, too biased; we all like to imagine that we are impartial and yet are we not all of us, at times, inclined to judge with our feelings rather than with our heads? Men believe they are immune from this so-called feminine peculiarity, but I have often seen the contrary. But my description of our political men must be considered rather from the point of view of how they fitted or did not fit into my life, than critically. In later war years, of course, I had to deal with them more closely, but not in my youth.

Many of those who have left a name in this country were in the ministry which received me on my first arrival in the country: Carp, Take Ionescu, Marghiloman, Alexander and Jaques Lahovary, Menelas Germani and others. Peter Carp, with his eyeglass screwed into one eye, I liked from the first. I cannot exactly say why, because, being exceedingly ironical he was rather frightening, but I felt attracted to him, I liked his face. He had an eagle nose, a queer-shaped bald head, and always looked particularly well-washed and clean. His sarcasms intimidated me, but I felt something human beneath his caustic attitude. I had the intuition that he liked and understood me. He appreciated my struggles, my desire to fight my way through and retain my personality in spite of obstacles. Once he said to me: "I have no anxiety about your

future." Somewhat astonished I asked why. "Because I have watched the way you have ever and again overcome and got out of your difficulties." These words made me ponder. It was true, occasionally my difficulties had led me to the very edge of the precipice, but I had never quite fallen over the side; I was however astonished that Peter Carp had followed up my various vicissitudes; I never imagined that these important gentlemen took anything but an official interest in me. This was however a mistake; many of them had even then an eye on me, weighing the pros and cons of my nature, interested for the country's sake as to what might lie slumbering within this unruly little woman. I was too busy living to ponder over my importance from a national point of view. It was a very long time before I considered myself important, and this explains why I was painfully astonished at the way my life was continually interfered with. I did so long to be left in peace; this, however, was never granted me, neither then nor later.

All the Lahovarys were exceedingly intelligent, they always knew more than anyone else, had prodigious memories, also inherited by the younger generation, male as well as female. There were four brothers of whom two, Alexander and Jaques, were in the Government when I came to Roumania.

I never came into closer contact with Alexander Lahovary, whom I remember as a kindly but absent-minded gentleman with dark whiskers, who held his head as though always searching for something beyond what was in the room. This came, I believe, from a way he had of pursuing his own thoughts even in a salon. I knew his wife, usually called Madame Symka, much better. She was *une grande élégante*, and always wore the latest Paris fashions; as before mentioned I was slightly in awe of her at first, she was so exceedingly worldly and clever and was the lady of the Conservative party who could best keep Madame Sturdza in order. Her wit was always ready to cap any of the Liberal lady's maliciousness, and in these "tongue duels" Madame Symka was an opponent of no small importance.

General Jaques Lahovary, the Minister of War, was a pleasant gentleman, gay and debonair and withal a capable soldier, much appreciated by King Carol but less so by the Prince, who in his youth was very severe and easily condemned those who were considered *léger*; the general being of an amorous disposition, the Prince disapproved of his gal-

lant adventures. He wore a drooping moustache and an eye-glass, his nose was large and hooked between somewhat puffy cheeks. I remember listening without much understanding to the tales related against him, and though ready to espouse my husband's appreciation of people, I was inclined to like Jaques Lahovary because of his extreme and cheerful amiability; a lover of women, he also had pleasant words for the shy little princess.

Alexander Marghiloman was the smart gentleman of the party, well-dressed, smiling, with easy, ingratiating manners. He was rich, kept a racing stable and a well-appointed house. He liked receiving and his hospitality was lavish and a little ostentatious. Our contact represented the easy, pleasant sides of life; here for once politics seemed to be put in the shade by Derby winners and conversations about Paris, *le monde où l'on s'amuse* and the elegancies of fashion.

At his country house near Buzău, his wife (born Stirbey, later Madame Ion Bratianu), of whom I have already spoken, had helped him to plant a lovely garden. Here also was his stud. We very much liked going to Villa Albatros, it reminded us of life abroad; I loved the horses and also knew how to appreciate the delicious home-grown strawberries and lovely roses, a speciality of the house. A day at the Marghilomans' villa was always a pleasant day and Marghiloman made us quite forget that he was a "Minister."

Take Ionescu, later so well known also in England, was a brilliant speaker; he was considered exceedingly clever and was always most agreeable to meet. In their discussions together I would hear the King and the Prince exchange their appreciations about this promising young man whom both predicted would make a fine career, but they always added: "If only one could count upon his character." I did not well understand what they meant and when I asked my husband he explained that he was not considered "absolutely moral in politics." Still, to-day, I am a bit vague as to the exact meaning of this. I cannot see that morals and politics have much to do with each other, but I suppose as in all things there are degrees. Take Ionescu was warm-hearted and understanding, broadminded, pleasant, but he lacked physical courage, which always astonished me. He even once admitted this to me in so many words, but this belongs to a much later period and cannot find its place here.

I knew very little of Menelas Germani except that he was considered a first-rate Minister of Finance. He had a curious trick, a sort of barking sneeze which interrupted all he said. I believe that he was in all ways a very honourable, trustworthy man who died before his time.

Now to return to Demetre Sturdza, that adamant, grey little man, all will and tenacity. I have only two souvenirs of more personal contact, the one tragic, the other comic, but even the tragic, as will be seen, had its humorous side. Both are worth relating, being characteristic of the times.

I had a good deal of trouble with my ladies-in-waiting and this chiefly came from the fact that *der Onkel*, for educational reasons, made those who were attached to us understand that they were beholden to him, not to us, and whenever a difference arose between us and any of our people, Uncle would once and for all, out of principle, take their part against us. This gave them the whip-hand, as they soon understood that in matters of conflict they would always be upheld. In those days it was *bien vu* to create difficulties, and this right to complain against us made a nightmare of our youth as it left us entirely at the mercy of those who served us, but who could at any moment invent reasons for offence. The Prince and I thus endured the bitterest hours of humiliation; we never got a fair hearing, from the beginning every case was decided against us. We simply had to clench our teeth and stand it, but I was less inclined to passivity than my husband so that, although profoundly peace-loving, all fighting seemed to fall to my share.

And so it came to pass that on a certain 10th of May (our National day) I quite inadvertently offended my lady-in-waiting. I was then expecting my fourth child and second son, Nicolas, and being unable to stand church ceremonies during those months, I was to appear only at the parade, where I would meet the rest of the family coming from the official Te Deum. So I had my own little procession in a grand carriage à la Daumont with four horses. Mignon was then the Benjamin. She was about four years old and a child any mother could have been proud of; pink and white with flaxen hair and long-shaped blue eyes shaded by dark lashes, she was indeed a prize baby; besides, she was adorably amiable. From earliest youth all my children were trained to

take part in official ceremonies, it came to them quite naturally and we had taught them to enjoy them thoroughly instead of being shy. The 10th of May was an occasion to dress them in their best, and I took a motherly pride in making them look as charming as possible. Always a favourite with the public, I also carefully chose my own gowns for these patriotic ceremonies, hat, cloak and parasol playing a great part in the whole scheme of colour.

My lady had come to fetch me and was to follow behind us in a second carriage. I duly ensconced myself in my grand barouche, the springs of which were so soft that you nearly fell on your nose when you stepped up to it, seating beside me my beloved child who looked like some marvellously grown flower in a show. The servants spread my finery around me and we were ready to start, when looking up, I saw my lady standing all alone on the threshold and spontaneously, out of the fullness of my heart, I asked if she would not prefer driving with us rather than alone in the second carriage and offered her the seat opposite myself and the child. With some demur she accepted and off we drove, the public giving us a great reception. I was so occupied acknowledging all the ovations and at the same time happily engrossed by the child at my side that I had little leisure to observe my lady's face. I quite naturally imagined she was as pleased as I was; who could feel anything but pleased in such radiant sunshine, everybody glad to see us and in one carriage with so adorable a child as Mignon?

What was therefore my consternation on receiving next morning an exceedingly disagreeable note from King Carol announcing to me that my lady-in-waiting had handed in her resignation under the plea that yesterday I had offended and humiliated her in public by seating her with her back to the horses instead of beside me, and that he, the King, considered her complaint entirely justified. What defence had I to make?

There have been hours in life when I have had the feeling that my brain was giving way under the pressure of too overpowering injustice. This was one of them. Every drop of blood in my body revolted against this outrageous accusation, also at the thought that any human being could have had daily contact with me for several years and yet believe me capable of wanting to humiliate him or her publicly or on any other

occasion. I might be hasty, overspontaneous, rash even, but to imagine that I, the warm-hearted, uncalculating woman, could in cold blood await an opportunity to mortify them in the eyes of all the world was too abominable. I got into such a state that all my household ran together in fear that Roumania's fourth hope should come to an untimely end.

My poor husband stood aghast; he too was overwhelmed with the injustice done to his wife, but from the first, beaten, hopeless, knowing too well how he was never given a hearing and that it would be no good trying to justify me, because we were condemned from the beginning, without any hope of being able to defend ourselves.

"Then I'll send for Sturdza," I declared amidst the flood of my tears.

"Why for Sturdza?"

"Because I am sick of it. Because he is Prime Minister and he belongs to the chief accusers, but I am at the end of my tether and mean to have it out at last and to have my say."

Nando tried to protest, but in vain, I *had* to see Sturdza.

Anxious royal nurses and maids fussing around me had put me to bed, my eyes were ablaze, my temples throbbing, my cheeks burning red, fair hair in revolt, I lay amidst my pillows, an indignant, defiant, angry princess, very much Queen Victoria's granddaughter and daughter of Marie Alexandrovna, Grand Duchess of Russia. And to the bedside of this royal little hurricane came Demetre Sturdza with his small, shrinking body and perennial tear.

And I did indeed have my say.

All the pent-up indignation of many years of oppression flowed from my lips, I spoke both in French and German, changing from one language to another, no matter what tongue, as long as I could find words and expressions strong enough to convey all I had to say.

"Have none of you any mercy!" I cried. "Don't you understand that I am a transplanted tree, that my roots were torn out of my own ground? I am one against many, a stranger in a strange land, defenceless, dependent upon the mercy of a country to which I came in good faith. But I have been trapped; all that you wanted of me was that I should give royal children to the country, you do not in the least mind what my feelings are or my sorrows, my revolts, my loneliness, my

struggles and the immense sadness of being eternally misunderstood. You were proud to import a princess '*de bonne famille*,' you appreciated my face, you all like to have a 'pretty Crown Princess,' you were glad also that I was healthy and that my manifold relations sit upon the different thrones of Europe. But what did any of you care about the inner 'me,' about my ideals, my hopes, about that great believing trust I put in you, about the timid girl who came from afar with the gift of her youth and goodwill. You judge me with your minds that are political clockworks, unfeeling, merciless, making no concessions for my youth. In the dryness of your hearts you voluntarily misjudge me, because it is too much trouble to try and understand me or to treat me as a human being. Like spiders you sit watching if I will fall, and when I do, you rejoice, because you believe it gives you the right to redouble your severity, your subjugation, your desire to hold me in chains. You never pause to remember that I am a stranger amongst you who are all at home.

"Constantly, with bleeding heart, must I listen to the accusations raised against me, to the calumnies invented to blacken my reputation, and there is not one who raises a voice in my defence—they all howl with the wolves. I am supposed humbly to submit to all this injustice because of the honour you have done me by accepting me as wife of your future king; but I can only declare that on my side I consider the honour just as much yours as mine. I am supposed to listen to the voice of the man in the street, but there is also another voice, the voice which cries from every drop of my blood, the voice of my ancestors; there is not only the voice of the man in the street, but there is also the heart of the woman you are torturing.

"I know there is the difference of our races. I am an Anglo-Saxon, you are Latin. I am fundamentally a believer; I believe in good, in God, in Justice, in Love and Pity. You are sceptics, cynics; nothing seems holy to you, you scoff at everything, everywhere you see ugliness and treachery, you do not believe in a pure heart.

"You see the dark, ugly side of everything, whilst I see the light. I believe in ideals, in fidelity, in honour, in good intentions; I am not eternally on the lookout for the wolf in sheep's clothing, whose every word is a lie. But even Latin and Anglo-Saxon could come to an understanding if there were no guile and treachery, no sneaky, tortuous de-

sire continually to ensnare me and put me in the wrong and to gain a complete and unfair mastery over me.

"I came to Roumania like a young and joyous warrior ready to enter your ranks, to salute your colours, to march bravely in your lines, a song on my lips, glad of any adventure, any effort, daring, perhaps, unconventional, but yours, heart and soul.

"But I am no match for your ruses, for your tricks and pitfalls, for your complicated artifices and chicanes; I am destined to be eternally beaten if your weapons are suspicion and deceit. But whose the shame? Mine or yours?

"But to-day this accusation of having wilfully hurt my lady's feelings, of having sneakily awaited a public occasion to humiliate her, is so revolting, such a screaming injustice that at last the worm turns, the prisoner will stand no more.

"My patience is at an end so I have sent for you, the Prime Minister, to declare that I am dead sick of it, will endure no more. I have decided to leave the country if this sort of thing continues; I shall shake its dust off my heels, return to my mother, taking with me the unborn child, boy or girl, which was to have been my fourth gift to those whose only sport it has been to suspect, calumniate and willingly misunderstand me. I am no born slave, honours cannot buy me; I cannot and will not submit to this sort of treatment and I warn you that at this hour I am ready to tear everything asunder. I am indifferent to the outcry there will be, to the scandal; you can explain my desertion as you will, nothing matters to me any more; all is at an end between us. I have only one overpowering desire left and that is to be free, free, free! To be able to stretch up my arms to the skies and cry a cry of triumphant release. I am free, free, I have broken my shackles, torn asunder the chains which bound me; I am free from persecution and dark intrigue, free to laugh and weep and to be a human being once more instead of a miserable puppet having to dance to any tune it amuses you to play. Free! no more having to humiliate myself before those I despise because of the blackness of their minds, no more afraid, my feet on firm ground again instead of the thin ice of your biased misunderstanding. *Vogelfrei*, because I mean to burn my boats behind me and to turn my face towards a new fate.

"There, Mr. Sturdza! this is what I have to say to you. To-day I am

indifferent if I shock or hurt or horrify you—for there is not an inch of my soul that you non-believers and calumniators have not bruised and wounded. This is the truth, all the truth, nothing but the truth, and may God stand by me in greater mercy than you have shown—Amen!!!——”

Little Sturdza was aghast. Small, grey, trembling in his shoes, he stood there, the classical tear oozing from the corner of his eye, his dry fingers nervously clasped, looking with horror at this young trapped animal who had suddenly turned to bite the hand which had so long held the whip. Impotent he stood there, unable to put in a word or stop the avalanche of my bitterness, which, having at last broken its dams, poured out with all the exaggeration and passionate resentment of wounded youth and the righteous indignation of a confident heart outraged.

Looking back I am well aware of the absurdity of the scene, especially because of the contrast between the two actors and the incongruousness of the accused having suddenly turned accuser. There stood the iron, authoritative little man listening to words such as he had never before heard out of the mouth of any man, much less out of the mouth of a woman, and that woman a foreign little princess whom he thought to be holding on a leading rein. And into the bargain he was in mortal fear that my paroxysms of indignant wrath might bring about an accident which would ruin the country's hope of a second prince.

I have only a hazy recollection of the defence poor little Sturdza put up. Anyhow he tried to pacify me and spoke wise words in keeping with his honourable function. He tried to make me understand that in Roumania people were touchy, over-critical, that the Dynasty was new and had to advance slowly, with precautions. Well aware of this, King Carol wisely knew that every act must first be strictly demurred at for fear of taking a false step; this was no doubt arduous but of paramount importance. I was young, unripe, I must therefore allow myself to be led and advised by those with deeper experience. People in this part of the world did not understand the liberty of my English ways, these gave rise to misinterpretations, I must take this into consideration. It might be the custom at my grandmother's court to offer your lady a back seat, here it was looked upon as an affront and my lady was therefore justified in her annoyance. He would, however, try

to arrange things and explain that there had been no premeditation on my part. I must not imagine that every man's hand was against me, on the contrary, I was much loved and the people were proud of the beautiful children I was giving them, but I must learn to be more considerate, more careful, less rash. Life was not a game but a serious business into which my betters had not only the right but also the duty to initiate me according to their wiser judgment and superior knowledge.

At that moment I think the tear actually rolled off the little man's cheek and seizing hold of my hand he implored me to put away all such sinful thoughts as desertion; this was unworthy of the brave soldier I professed to be and above all I must calm myself for the sake of the young life within me.

By this time my eyes were red, my nose a burning misery, my hair dishevelled, my strength spent; Nando came in almost timidly, anxious about what situation he would find. He patted me on my back with his beautifully shaped hand and promised that Mr. Sturdza would speak to Uncle, that I must no more excite myself, nor weep, that I must rest, etc. . . . etc.

So the storm abated, I blew my poor little nose, dried my swollen eyes, and lay there like a pricked balloon, entirely prostrate, but with a numb feeling of satisfaction at having relieved myself, in words at least, of the pent-up misery of many years of misunderstanding.

Nando was touchingly kind, and I can still feel the affectionate pressure of his long fingers on my shoulder. So gladly would he have helped, but having accepted his fate, what could he do? He had learnt obedience, his patience was without end; I, in my turn, must resign myself to the inevitable. I listened with the weakness of the exhausted, and yet faintly the question stirred in my brain—would I ever really enter the ranks of the resigned?

My second personal experience with Demetre Sturdza was of another kind but had also to do with the conflicts and storms of my young life. Here Ion Kalinderu reappears on the scene. Ion Kalinderu whom, although I have not yet mentioned him since the day of my arrival, played a great and, I may say, steady part in our lives.

Kalinderu was Uncle's classical deputy when we had to be admonished, when we needed "a talking to"; he was the instrument of

Uncle's stately regime, the authorized channel of his kingly displeasure. Whenever we were considered unsubmitive, and Uncle did not want to do the scolding himself, Kalinderu was deputed to go and reprimand us and lead us back to the ways of virtue. The Kalinderu days were bad days, because his appearance on the scene almost always meant that we had in some way transgressed and that it was going to be thoroughly rubbed into us in so many weighty words.

Nando dreaded the Kalinderu days even more than I did; by force of circumstance he had been obliged to look upon these scoldings as serious and far-reaching, whilst, although I knew all that Kalinderu represented in Uncle's mind, there was just that touch of the comic about the worthy gentleman which tickled my sense of humour and there was also this: Kalinderu was not quite immune to my youth and femininity. When my husband was scolded it was indeed *ein Staatsakt*, but when the King's deputy passed from the Prince's to the Princess's chamber there was another light in his eye and in spite of his dignity he became just a little bit of a "fine fellow," and that wee difference was the chink in his armour where I was concerned. In fact he rather enjoyed this part of his mission. My room was pretty, full of flowers, my chairs soft, I was young and my hair was golden; *c'est tout dire!*

Kalinderu had his own way of pronouncing French; although his speech was rotund and fustian, his "es" were "ess" and this deprived his sermons of some of their dignity, because, however impressed and downcast I might be, a smile flickered in my mind even if I did not dare let it appear at the corner of my lips. Whenever my delinquencies had been more than usually reprehensible he would begin with the sentence which had become classical: "Esqué vous voulez dévenir Reine?" which always awoke in me the desire to reply: "This entirely depends upon more things than one"; but I knew when and when not to give way to levity and yielded to no untimely mirth in the great presence. But this let me say for Kalinderu, he was thoroughly and honestly devoted to his Royal Family, he was the convinced and obedient servant of his sovereign; but he was also kindly disposed towards those destined one day to take his master's place and had a really grandfatherly love for our children, especially for Elisabetha whose beauty, even at an early age, made an impression upon him.

On this particular occasion I am about to recount, Kalinderu appeared

in a spirit of conciliation. He knew that at that period I was being more sinned against than sinning, but he guessed that storms were brewing and that the periodical necessity had arisen to divert into safe channels my growing dissatisfaction with life in general and my household in particular. It was still a little bit the old ill: *la Princesse s'ennuie* but with an added touch of danger as the *Princesse* was no more quite the same tame and idiotic little innocent of the first year; she was mother of several children and had developed more than was considered safe.

So along came Ion Kalinderu, olive branch in hand, head cocked on one side, a sly look in his half-closed eye.

"Heh! heh!" and the worthy gentleman twirled the black cord of his eye-glass between his fingers; "was I not a little pale? Would not a little change do me good? But H.M. the King" (Kalinderu always rose from his seat, even if the seat were a soft arm-chair, when he pronounced this august name) "did not consider it opportune that I should go abroad for the present so he, Kalinderu, had come to propose that I should visit one of the Crown Domains under his charge; H.M." (again Kalinderu rose from his seat) "looked with favour upon this project, which he considered instrumental both in giving pleasure and education. Would I therefore accept an invitation for a two days' visit to Gherghița, near Ploești? And so that I should also have instructive as well as stimulating company H.M. had proposed that Mr. Demetre Sturdza, the Prime Minister, and Mr. Ion Bratianu, Minister of Communications, should accompany me, as well as my lady-in-waiting."

Eager for any occasion to see, whenever I could, something of the country, I willingly accepted this eminently seemly proposal, although the company of the Prime Minister was not in those days considered conducive to amusement, but this was no question of amusement; at King Carol's court the word amusement was taboo. This was to be an instructive excursion, pleasant also, but strictly within the limits of the permissible; hence Demetre Sturdza, Ion Kalinderu and Ion Bratianu were on the borderline between the pleasant and the permitted, or perhaps partook a little of both.

So to Gherghița, near Ploești, I was duly conducted in this learned and decorous company, and there in a modest little house which had



ION KALINDERU



WALDORF ASTOR ON "AIRSHIP"



OFF FOR MY MORNING RIDE ON "AIRSHIP"

been embellished according to Kalinderu's taste, I spent two instructive days.

The walls of my room were hung with many photographs and prints of the Royal Family but more especially of Ion Kalinderu. Ion Kalinderu amongst his functionaries, amongst the peasants, Ion Kalinderu inspecting a bull, Ion Kalinderu with his booted foot on the trunk of a fallen tree, Ion Kalinderu with a gun over his back, Ion Kalinderu amongst baskets of pears and apples, besides giant heaps of maize, witnessing the exercising of colts and fillies in a field, the watering of pigs in a river, the feeding of chickens in a farmyard, the harvesting of grapes in a mighty vineyard, Kalinderu on a doorstep, on horseback, in a forest, Kalinderu beside a waterfall, and in all these photographs the administrator of the Crown Domains had a wise, a satisfied, nay even a sly little look in his eye. In most of these pictures his hand was thrust into his waistcoat, and when in sporting attire, a "cute" little dagger dangled from his belt. We loved these photographs of Kalinderu and added to them with our Kodaks whenever we could; Kalinderu was always willing to be photographed.

I thoroughly enjoyed this royally sanctioned, somewhat comic, holiday away from the daily round. Demetre Sturdza was in full force during meals when I was his attentive pupil, whilst Bratianu came to the fore in field and forest, following me even on horseback, for Ion Kalinderu bred horses on his domains and the best of these were put at my disposal during my stay. It must not, however, be imagined that Bratianu and I rode *en tête-à-tête*, oh dear no! Kalinderu accompanied me everywhere and we were followed by a goodly army of mounted peasants and woodmen, quite a regal procession in fact.

Everywhere I was given picturesque receptions, flowers were thrust into my hands, strewn under my feet; I was taken to the church, to the school, to the farms, dairies and outhouses; we visited neat model cottages and all the tidy and useful improvements Ion Kalinderu had introduced. All things were lengthily expounded and during meals Demetre Sturdza continued my education; no time nor occasion was to be wasted.

Only Ion Bratianu, being, as our kind little *Täntchen* once expressed it, the only young man under forty her niece was allowed to meet, considered that enough was being done for my instruction and that he

at least might add a more treble note to this puritanical holiday party, so instead of overwhelming me with more knowledge, he occasionally lightened the ceremonious atmosphere with a witty and well-placed joke.

And thus quite naturally enters Ion Bratianu, the only young man under forty that, because of his attributes, I was occasionally allowed to see!

Burdened with the glory of his father, Ion Bratianu was, however, a personality even without his name, and what was more important to me then, Ion Bratianu was an eminently agreeable companion and, let it be added, Bratianu II was a lady's man.

Tall, but even in his youth of somewhat heavy build, he had fine dark, velvety eyes, but a rather too high voice. Pleasantly ironical, watchful to the pitch of slyness, nothing escaped Bratianu's observation. His movements were slow, lazy-looking and he was never particular about his clothes. In those days, kept carefully under by Sturdza, it was nevertheless clearly evident that Ion Bratianu would certainly rise.

Sensing in me the future, Bratianu never made the mistake of considering me a negligible quantity; I was given to understand from the beginning, that for him at least, I existed in more ways than one.

To say that I already liked him then, would be saying too much, but he could not be ignored; he went out of his way to make himself pleasant, he was young, ambitious, far-seeing and from the first exceedingly well appreciated by King Carol. Being Minister of Communications, it fell to his share to escort us when we moved about the country. A better travelling companion could not be imagined and it must be admitted that his company was stimulating, his conversation pleasant, witty, interesting. In spite of his agreeable ways, however, he never missed an occasion to let you feel that his jokes and amiabilities were only the outer cover of the very decided and unyielding personality hidden beneath. He was ready to banter and to be amusing, but we were never quite to forget that he was heir to those who to-day held the whip.

My husband liked him, but his liking was tinged with a slight feeling of diffidence as though unsure on what ground he was treading. There

was something a little overpowering about Bratianu which awoke an uneasy sensation; his glove was of velvet but one was not very sure what lay beneath.

Bratianu had a way with ladies; he liked women, but in a somewhat Oriental manner. He would use his charm to the utmost but was very careful never to be the dupe.

It was our lot to work together later, when our time came. Our association has been much criticized, a thousand tales have been broadcast about it, many of them mere legends, but a mutual love for Roumania made us recognize in each other our capacity for work and active patriotism.

I do not wish, like Prince Bülow, whose reminiscences everyone is reading to-day, to quote all the things said to my advantage, but this prediction, made about us at a time when I, at least, was still much reprimanded and of small importance, is not without interest. It was pronounced by a very intelligent financier, unofficial adviser of King Carol whose audiences were given privately. This clever old gentleman declared: "There are two people who are destined to play a big part in the reign of King Ferdinand; Ion Bratianu and our fair little Princess." But this is reaching into the future and I must return to these personages in their youth.

The visit to Gherghița was not the first outing I had had in Bratianu's company. There had been an earlier excursion, this one also pompously organized by Ion Kalinderu, who had persuaded H.M. that a *tournée* through the Moldavian Crown Domains in the Bistrița valley would be of educational importance to both the Prince and Princess.

For some unexplained reason King Carol hardly ever allowed us to travel about. When I came, my husband had hardly seen anything of Roumania, except certain of the more important towns which on official occasions he had visited with his uncle, so Nando was as pleasantly excited as I was to see this lovely valley, one of the most beautiful in Roumania. Ion Bratianu, because of his official status, was one of the party, and being witty he was of course amusingly conscious of our good Kalinderu's amiable absurdities. While being exceedingly deferential to one so much older and more solemn than himself, he knew well how to show up the elder gentleman's comic side, thereby establishing a

sort of gay freemasonry between himself and the royal couple who were only too glad of an occasional laugh. Luckily Ion Kalinderu was so imbued with a sense of his own importance, so aware of his own value, that he was quite unconscious of any byplay.

Part of the excursion was done on a raft down the river through quite beautiful scenery, a most lazy and delightful mode of conveyance which entirely suited Bratianu, who liked his ease. Kalinderu never relaxed his pompous attitude, but Bratianu liked to unstiffen and loll about, nor did he belong to those who appeared in a top-hat on country excursions; Bratianu understood the comfort of country clothes, though he never tried to look sporting.

Many miles were also done in local carriages on long and dusty roads, and in the evening we were lodged in the hospitable houses of the Crown Domains much in the style of Gherghița but in quite a different landscape; mountains and forests instead of plains. The walls of these houses were likewise copiously ornamented with portraits of Kalinderu.

We also visited the convents of Agapia and Varatic and the monasteries of Neamț and Bistrița, which were occasions for crowded and picturesque receptions when nuns or monks flocked around us like great dark birds. There was much ringing of bells and strewing of flowers before our feet, also much nasal singing in the churches followed by the eating of very sweet and sticky jams in the Starițz's or Starițza's reception rooms.

These had the well-known convent atmosphere, being musty with the reek of old apples, cold wood smoke and the dust of the many bright rugs decorating both walls and floor. There were also queer odds and ends brought from Jerusalem or Mount Athos, carved shells, inlaid woodwork and pressed flowers of which the anemones had astonishingly retained their blood-red colour. Now and again a fine old icon, which in those days I had not yet learned to appreciate, hung side by side with staring chromos of saints and bishops.

I loved these far-off, solitary places; there was poetry about them and the old-world atmosphere of things that do not evolve, retaining through the generations their ancient traditions, superstitions and habits which the artist side in me hopes will never be effaced by progress.

We spent a night at one of these convents; I remember that it was a moonlight night and that Bratianu told me that he was always senti-

mental on moonlight nights even in a convent. But when my husband offered me a cigarette, Ion Kalinderu stayed his hand: "Esqué vous voulez dévénir Reine? then please Your Royal Highness no smoking in a convent." . . .

Those good old days!

Other prominent members of the Liberal party were Jean Duca, the youngest of them, and Mr. Costinescu, who looked like a handsome old Father Christmas. He was not supposed to be as benevolent as his looks, but he was rich, had a numerous and prosperous family and had the appearance of a patriarch. As far as I was concerned he always showed me much sympathy. Jean Duca was slight, wiry, and wore eyeglasses. His father, an eminent engineer, was head of the railway; he was hollow-cheeked and delicate-looking and died too soon. Jean Duca was a brilliant speaker; he and Bratianu were looked upon as the two most promising young men of the Liberal party. I knew Jean Duca less in his younger days than later on. His keen, inquisitive, appreciative mind made of him stimulating company. Of Jean Duca I always said that a better audience than he was could not be imagined; he took such an interest in all you had to say, encouraged you in your peculiarities and rejoiced over each spicy bit of information he could obtain. He had ready enthusiasms and the great people in history stimulated his vivid imagination. He loved to hear my tales about Queen Victoria, my Russian relations, King Edward, and the Kaiser. A confirmed democrat, he was nevertheless irresistibly attracted to the "Great." All that was *crâne*, *panache*, roused his admiration and he had a school-boy's delight in a good story, in a *bon mot*. He was not a lion hunter, but success impressed him; the world was a stage to him and he preferred the great actors. His education had been principally French, but he admired England and all that came from that Blessed Isle. He, with Take Ionescu, was one of the few political men who spoke English. He knew every Derby winner and admired Lord Rosebery. All quick and sensational careers impressed and fascinated him. He was never a snob, but had a pleasantly fresh delight in success. Jean Duca and I had a good deal to do with each other; we later, so to say, grew old together; he never belonged to the "bugbears," but being excitable and hasty, which last characteristic was also in a way mine, we had hours of

disagreement, but we were always friends enough to "have it out."

Jean Duca was a keen, sometimes too keen, politician and his party, of which he was the chief, his very *raison d'être*.

There were many other politicians who might be mentioned, such as Theodor Rosetti, Alecu Constantinescu, Michel Pherikidi, Juvara, Lascar, Maiorescu, Georges Cantacuzène, Constantin Olanescu, General Manu, Fotin Enescu, Georges Marzescu, etc., but these were not so intimately mixed up with my private life, though many will appear again later when I have to speak of my riper years and those events which counted double in my life.

Amongst the diplomats of our country I had many friends. Foremost in my youth were the three Ghyca brothers.

The name Ghyca is widespread in Roumania and when written with a "y" instead of an "i" it spells blue blood. There were several reigning Prince Ghycas in Roumanian history. But the name was so recurrent that an amusing anecdote is related about a foreigner, who entering Roumanian society, was presented to so many Ghycas that he finally imagined that Ghyca was a specially honourable title; most Ghycas he had met having been elderly gentlemen, when finally a young Ghyca was introduced to him he exclaimed: "So young and already Ghyca!"

Emil, Alexander and Grégoire Ghyca were all three Ministers in different posts at the same time, one in Berlin, one in Vienna and one in Constantinople.

All three were charming, but the most sympathetic was Emil Ghyca of Vienna. His outward appearance was irresistible. A wee man with a round snub nose, and hair like feathers on his head, later quite white, but then iron-grey, he had short legs and turned in his toes. His complexion was pink-and-white, his smile and his jokes irresistible. An eminent diplomat, much appreciated in each post he occupied, he was admirably seconded by his intelligent and aristocratic wife Catherine (born Florescu), whose size exactly suited that of her husband. These two were the most pleasant couple imaginable, witty, sociable, dignified; to pass an hour in their company was always delightful.

Grégoire Ghyca was married to a sister of Queen Natalie of Serbia, an exceedingly lovely woman with the most perfect features and the much praised olive skin. She was greatly admired in Berlin society where

even the Kaiser, so it is said, was not blind to her good looks, though the Kaiser was not much of a ladies' man. Mariette Ghyca, although clever, pleasant, and even original, was not as easy to get on with as her sister-in-law, Catherine. Mariette could on occasion be sharp and prickly, but being a great admirer of her beauty I was always pleased to see her; both she and Catherine generally spent the summer at Sinaia with their children, where they inhabited two pretty villas side by side in the same garden.

The third Ghyca brother, Alexander, was the most witty of the three. He was considered a *mauvais sujet* and separated from his wife. He had three children, a war daughter and two sons, one of whom later married a singer and had plenty of money to spend whilst his father was supposed to thrive on debts. Jeanne, the daughter, had the most beautiful eyes, liquid brown eyes which appeared to be burning hot. Jeanne was mostly looked after by her Aunt Mariette.

Alexander Ghyca for some reason had a great liking for me. He was a stout, jovial gentleman whose jokes when in male company were, I believe, salty, but he liked female society which got him, so it was said, into many a difficulty. He and Jean Balaceanu were considered amongst the most witty men in Roumania. Alexander Ghyca belonged to a set that it was not considered orthodox for a young princess to appreciate, but once, during a period when I was sadly down on my luck, Alexander Ghyca, whose large heart could not bear to see a young thing so depressed and cast down, said a word to me I shall never forget. I was moping alone in a corner before the birth of one of my children whilst a gay company of people, less young than I, were playing tennis. Ghyca came up to me (like his irresistible brother Emil, Alexander Ghyca also turned in his toes) and looking at me with fatherly affection said, "Believe me, my fair young Princesse Lointaine, people love you much more than you are allowed to believe. Not every man's hand is against you as you are given to understand, the country loves you and counts upon you, so take courage, there is no reason for despair!"

Frivolous and perhaps reprehensible Alexander Ghyca! I wonder if he realized the immense and healing comfort of his words? A kind word spoken in the hour of distress is indeed as dew on wilting grass. A favourite German writer of mine says that "ingratitude is dearth of experience" and I would like to add that "gratitude" is as manna to the

soul. He who surrenders himself whole-heartedly to the feeling of gratitude is a rich man.

I was rich after those few words pronounced by Alexander Ghyca, and then for the first time looking at him more carefully, I realized that it was from her father that Jeanne had inherited her hot, velvety, brown eyes.

CHAPTER XX

MY FRIENDS

AN everlastingly burning question in royal lives is the question of friends.

No man, royal or otherwise, can get through life without friends, so at least it seems to me. "Friend" is one of the most sacred words in the human language; whole books have been written upon the subject of friendship, and to be pitted is he who has not known the comfort, the beauty, the inspiration of friendship.

In the case of royalty, however, friends are undoubtedly a complication. King Carol, that wise, self-controlled, level-headed monarch, was against friendship for princes. He knew the difficulties, the danger even, of friendships in a palace, and when I first arrived he had solemnly decreed that I should have no friends. At first this was possible because, being still dependent upon the Prince and the King, I was kept strictly away from people of my own age, or if I ever met them, it was in a crowd, quite impersonally. But I was too vital, too magnetic also, not to attract friendship. My very isolation made others all the more desirous of breaking through the defences which encircled me; besides, my immense urge towards life and liberty could not very long be kept in bounds. I was not one of those who submit to starvation of heart and soul.

But to-day, having travelled a long way, I understand why Uncle was so apprehensive of friends for the young ones of his family. Youth reaches out to youth and knows little of discrimination; the urge for companionship, for a kindred soul, is so great that dross can often be taken for gold.

Youth is rash, hasty, seldom pauses to weigh consequences, sees all things through the prism of its desires, and when, as in my case, the heart is without guile, caution is unknown and traps are easily laid, but every misadventure amongst royalty inevitably becomes public property,

and therefore they have not, like others, the right of making mistakes, or getting into trouble.

All this Uncle knew, but at our age we could not accept his wisdom; each human being must find out for himself, it is seldom that another's experience is helpful; we listen, but we do not assimilate; another man's toothache is not mine, and never can I be entirely in sympathy with his pain unless I have toothache myself.

In my turn, I have much pondered upon the problem of royal friends and have come to no satisfactory solution. Friends will be, must be, but they will never be easy to "canalize" and keep within satisfactory bounds.

In the lives of simple mortals there may be good or bad friends, but there is not that inequality of caste which from the first creates a disproportion of values. Royal friends, however excellent, selfless and modest, are an object of envy to those outside; they inevitably become *le point de mire*, are approved or disapproved of according to the seldom quite impartial appreciation of those who have *not* yet been chosen. "Put not your trust in princes," and yet how often have I of the inner circle seen that it was much more those outside who obliged the Prince to become faithless than the Prince's own fickleness. I have witnessed and have myself experienced the tragedy of having been compelled by public opinion to abandon a friend.

There are also the friends of your friends—these are often harmful, as anything in the form of a clan is dangerous in a palace; this can be observed all through history and yet it happens so easily and almost always unperceived by the one around whom all centres.

Nothing can be done privately in a palace; everything is known, secrets are almost impossible, and the danger of friends' friends is that they often use the favourite as a channel for their own ambitions, as a means of reaching the royal ear. It is not only the Prince or the King who receives flattery, but also his friend, and the friend perhaps is still less immune to flattery than the royal gentleman himself. Few are strong or impersonal enough not to be glad of being the chosen, glad in a selfish way, in a way which finally harms the one to whom he is giving his devotion.

Although an ardent defender of my own kind, I am one of those people who can look at things from all sides and I must admit that the

language of courts is mostly flattery. This is not because the royal personage demands this of others, nor that those who approach them mean to be false, but throughout the ages this has been the way; the great, royal or otherwise, are approached with pleasant words. They inspire awe because imbued with power, and this is the curse of power that no man approaches it without beforehand preparing his words so that they can be acceptable. And each man who comes to his sovereign brings his own truth according to his own light, but that truth has passed through many brains before it reaches the royal ear; it is therefore unfair to say that a royal man never hears the truth, rather let it be said that he hears too many truths and is often at a loss which to accept, and it is but human to accept that truth most pleasant to hear.

Power is both glorious and terrible; within it lies the seed of every possibility, but few who have been given the right to wield it are big enough, strong enough not to be contaminated by its corroding effect. The very awe it inspires in those who approach it encourages the great to abuse that strength which is theirs.

I have never wielded absolute power, but I have been close to those who have, and I was always astonished and saddened by the way their clearness of view diminished according to how they reacted towards the flattery of those intent upon swaying their will.

This is not peculiar to royalty, but to all those who are in high places. Those in opposition or standing outside, unless moved by jealousy or petty malice, generally retain a clearer, more rational view. But when in their turn they are in power I have seen with distress how their clear-sightedness dwindled, and they began doing exactly those things that they had criticized whilst merely onlookers.

To King Carol's honour it must be said that he was level-headed beyond the average. He loved power, nor was he completely without certain vanities, but they were small vanities and it cannot be said that they ever mastered him. He believed himself a great politician, probably he was; anyhow, he was wise and full of deliberation, and the incense burnt before him never turned his head. He had a high idea of his own ability, his ego was paramount, but having himself entirely in hand and having gone beyond desire, he was strong enough to dominate others and knew how to keep them at a safe distance. He certainly knew how to form his own version of the truth out of the many truths others

brought to him; King Carol had no human needs, his heart was just as much under his control as his nerves and his desires; he had put every passion behind him. He stood alone, his eye was clear, his will of iron, he was swayed by no personal sympathies or antipathies, he was impartial, impersonal, provident; he believed in his right to rule.

Der Onkel was a hard master; his shadow lay over our youth like a weight, but Uncle wielded power as it should be wielded, passionlessly, coldly, justly; in his hands power was not abused. That he had no understanding of the young was the result of his too great mastery over himself; to him, all else but work seemed futile, unworthy, almost incomprehensible. Uncle was a pedant, but on a large scale, and Uncle never felt the need of a friend.

But I needed friends. . . .

In writing this, many faces pass before my eyes, male and female, faces of great and small, faces of many nationalities. Both joy and pain are attached to their memory, fun and laughter, but also many a tear.

Sometimes you choose your friends, sometimes they choose you; chance and circumstance play of course a great part, but it is all the same the law of attraction which is chiefly responsible in the selection of friends. There are also, alas, those that you tolerate out of pity because you have not the courage to rebuff their advances—these occasionally become heavy weights on your road. It were better to be pitiless from the beginning, but I regret to say that all through life I have been a coward in this way and no end of complications have arisen from this weakness of being over-sensitive of hurting another's feelings. I always hated humiliating even the most unworthy or uninteresting; but to burden yourself, out of pity, with those uncongenial to you is a mistake you nearly always live to rue; I have made this mistake more than once.

At first, because of my enforced isolation, my friends were chiefly chosen amongst foreigners, more especially from amongst the diplomats in residence at Bucarest.

Sir Hugh and Lady Wyndham, the British Minister and his wife, had two daughters, Florence and Nelly. Florence had great talent for painting, she was a serious, quiet girl and shared my artistic interests,

whilst Nelly was always laughing and was a keen rider ; so Nelly used to accompany me on horseback and many a splendid gallop have we had together which cemented a pleasant companionship based upon our mutual love for this sport.

The Wyndhams were followed by Sir John and Lady Kennedy, who had one daughter and four sons, three of whom were killed later in the Great War. Yone Kennedy had been born in Japan, hence the unusual name of Yone which has a melodious exotic sound. She was a sweet-faced, fair-haired girl, somewhat younger than myself ; we saw a lot of each other and Yone and I became great friends. We were very dissimilar in character, and occasionally I rather astounded, not to say shocked, my friend, who was timid and a little old-fashioned and very pious. I was more turbulent, rasher, less careful as to appearances ; also I propounded views upon independence which rather astonished Yone. I slightly awed her, but her loving heart knew nothing but loyalty ; she did not judge when she did not understand, but occasionally a disturbed, almost hurt expression would pass over her face when my unconventionality seemed to overstep the proprieties of her own very severe code.

Yone and I shared impressions, enjoyed outdoor exercise together, discussed books, art, social questions and were interested in our neighbours. Our opinions about people were not always the same but this was stimulating. Though diffident, sometimes almost timorous and certainly oversensitive, Yone was one of those people whose fundamental principles are unshakable ; there was a strength beneath her apparent weakness which I always admired. Yone also accompanied me on horseback though she was a less daring rider than Nelly Wyndham, but as the Kennedys remained longer at Bucarest, our association lasted longer and our friendship was not uprooted when came the sad hour of parting, and in later life we never lost sight of each other.

The inevitable transferring of diplomats from one post to another was a continual source of heartache. I have known many an hour of sadness when the relinquishing of friends was a real uprooting and all the more melancholy because it was final, a slice of life never destined to be renewed.

In the far-off country to which I had come, and because of the strict prohibitions to which we were submitted, the diplomatic friends and acquaintances played a big part in our lives.

In pre-War days the personnel of the Austro-Hungarian Legation was always smart and numerous and very pleasant from a social point of view, and more than one friend did I have in their midst. Foremost amongst these was a young and agreeable couple, Count and Countess Fritz Larisch. He was an excellent rider and kept fine horses. His wife May, a lovely rosy-cheeked, blue-eyed little lady, became one of my closest friends. She always looked happy and her fair hair spread like a halo round her beaming face. "Little Countess," or "My faithful follower" as I called her, was too busy creating a family to be able to do much riding except on a mountain pony, in fact she was never much of a horsewoman although it was the principal passion of the Larisch family. But although this favourite sport could not be shared, we saw much of each other and a warm, steady friendship grew up between us, based upon the good and pleasant things of life. It was veritably an association of two life-loving young women at a period when life was easy and the world prosperously at peace. There was never anything turbulent or tragic about our friendship, it was all sunshine and smiles. "Fritzi," who was adored by his wife, often rode with me and later he brought a small pack of hounds from his house and organized drags, which I much enjoyed.

Round about this period, and also a little later, there were still several other pleasant young Austrians at the Austro-Hungarian Legation, such as Graf Lago, Rubido-Zichy, Colonel Roswadowski, Baron Gall, all of them keen riders and dancers. Then there was Otto Franz, tall, interesting looking, with a humorous eye and secretive smile; he had been recently operated on so could not ride, but he was exceedingly intelligent and a very pleasant companion. There were also Pejatchewitch, Czekonics and still others such as May and Carl Fürstenberg, he being the younger brother of Max Fürstenberg, the Kaiser's great friend; and the Otto Czernins, and others who have now dispersed into many countries after the collapse of the great dual Empire.

May Fürstenberg was one of the Festetics girls who had driven with me during that unforgettable battle of flowers in Nice when we had had such a success in our orange-decorated carriage. She was a lovable woman with a slow mode of speech and a wee cast in one eye which added to the charm of her face. She was one of the most passively gentle women I ever met; nothing upset her equilibrium, she would

speak of amazing events with perfect calm, also recount the most surprising anecdotes as though they were child's talk, never accentuating the point; I have never met another woman so benignly, emotionlessly candid; every incident, even the most astounding, would be related *sans commentaires*, in the same even, gentle, unemotional voice. It was a delight to listen to her, but she was in no wise trying to be funny. Her complexion was perfect and she had a lovely short nose ending in an attractively square tip; her heart was of gold, but nothing could shake her equanimity.

Otto Czernin had an English wife, daughter of Lord Grimthorpe; their *ménage* was somewhat stormy and later they separated. She was most agreeable and cultivated but over highly strung. He was a great sportsman and had a dogged chin, *à la Mussolini*, and cold, rather fierce eyes. I was friends with both of them and used to hear both sides of the question and neither resented the other confiding in me. In a strange way I became for a time, because of their mutual devotion to me, a link between them.

But my dearest friends of all were the Astors.

I met Waldorf Astor and his sister Pauline the year of King Edward's Coronation. We were asked down to Cliveden for lunch on the classical Sunday when everyone leaves town. It was an invitation like any other, a mere politeness, but it was the starting point of a very dear friendship which has meant much in my life.

From the very moment they were introduced to me I felt a strong and spontaneous sympathy for this charming brother and sister, and they too liked me without reserve.

The luncheon-party was such a success that the Astors invited my husband and myself with our suites to come and spend several weeks at Cliveden whilst we were waiting for the Coronation, which had been put off owing to King Edward's sudden illness.

A more charming couple than Waldorf Astor and his sister Pauline it has never been given me to meet. By some happy chance there was a perfect affinity of taste between us, somehow we looked at life in the same way; the same things amused or bored us, we had much the same opinions and ideals.

More highly strung than I was, both brother and sister found in me

a reliable and understanding companion; although somewhat older than they were I was able to share their every hope and fear, their aspirations and ambitions, and they gave me unstintedly their young and charming sympathy.

Those few weeks at beautiful Cliveden belong to the most perfect memories of my life. It was pure bliss. Rather starved of those things I had been born to, I found at Cliveden a healthy life of freedom in superb surroundings with young companions entirely congenial.

Mrs. Astor had died when her children were quite young and Mr. Astor, absorbed by his many affairs, was a rather grim and unbending parent with tastes and habits that his children did not share. Immensely rich, conventionally worldly but at the same time a great student, he had nothing of the loving parent about him, and though he was full of excellent principles, he rather over-awed his children. Although they were very popular and always had the house full of acquaintances, there was a certain loneliness about the young people which left room for the absorbing friendship which grew up between us.

There was also a younger brother John, then at Eton, and a little invalid sister suffering from a severe heart complaint. Pauline was like a mother to the sick child and spent most of her nights looking after her, as it was during the night that the child suffered most.

Waldorf had had a fall during a game of polo and had damaged his knee so that he had to walk about with a stick. But young and sport-loving as he was, although unable to sit astride just then, he would accompany me on long rides, on a lady's saddle, most generously lending me his polo ponies in turn, and thus together we rode all over the country, long rambles through exquisite scenery, occasionally going for gallops in Windsor Park.

The degree of enchantment this free, easy English country life brought me is impossible to describe. It was *absolute* happiness.

Every atom of body and soul were content. I knew it was only a respite, an oasis on life's road, a time that would never come again, but I lived those weeks with all the ardour of my nature which knows how to enjoy, knows also how to be gloriously grateful for all good received. All that I received at Cliveden was good, healthy, whole-hearted, and the companionship of this perfect brother and sister was more precious to me than I can say.

Pauline had the most charming face, framed by dark waving hair. Her eyes were large, brown and exceedingly bright, they looked just a little startled as though everything came to her as a surprise. She moved with perfect grace, was animated, witty, and had a delightful laugh.

There was something of a gazelle about her and she had a quiet dignity seldom met with in one so young. In spite of her delicious gaiety, a haze of sadness lay over her, owing no doubt to the sickness of the little sister and to having lost her mother too soon.

There was also something of this sadness about Waldorf; there was a great likeness between him and his sister. He too had large velvety brown eyes and a charming smile. Tall and exceedingly slim he had a certain shyness of manner which added to his charm. His voice was low-pitched and exceedingly sympathetic. Never had I met a more attractive blending of gaiety and good manners than in these two young people who had come from beyond the seas.

That same autumn the little sister died very suddenly and both Pauline and Waldorf came to me to Sinaia, he to recover from an operation to his knee and she to get over the first terrible loneliness after the death of the child to which she had been foster-mother.

This started the delightful habit of yearly visits. Both Pauline and Waldorf were delicate, and although I knew nothing of illness, I looked after them in turns. Older than they were, and yet still young, I used in a way to mother them, although I was their companion as well. They loved Roumania, appreciating its beauty and originality, and their great interest for the country did much to strengthen my growing love for the land of my adoption. Their perfect friendship gave me courage and hope and brought me a companionship of which I had been starved. Also their humorous way of helping me to meet and overcome my difficulties gave me a fresh outlook upon life and a greater confidence in my surroundings.

Waldorf had an extraordinarily sweet and unselfish nature, very unusual in one so young. He was exceedingly thoughtful for others and was continually inventing occasions for giving pleasure, and this charming quality, coupled with a keen sense of humour, made everything, even official ceremonies and national festivities, a source of amusement.

King Carol appreciated these young people; their manners were so charming and the intelligent interest they took in the country pleased Roumania's stern ruler so that he more or less sanctioned this friendship with his approval.

Of course there remained the danger of jealousies cropping up to destroy a companionship which was like life itself to me; accustomed to tremble for all I loved and having deeply suffered through the many intrigues of which the High Inquisitor was the chief centre, I no longer dared count upon peace. But the perfect tact of this brother and sister steered us more or less safely over the reefs that might at any time have sunk the boat of our friendship. Although younger in years, they were more worldly-wise than I was, they understood how to repress my over-rash impulses and taught me many a lesson of moderation. They loved me as good friends should, not blindly but with hearts always ready to understand and help.

Horses were a passion we shared. Waldorf was a beautiful rider and gave me many a useful hint about riding, the sport I most loved. I was of course an able and eager pupil, and followed up his advice "intelligently" as he used to say. He would find horses for me in England and many a beloved mount has thus come to my stables, polo ponies, hunters, hacks and thoroughbreds, the most beloved of all being a polo pony with a vicious eye, called Airship. A regular beast of a horse he was, bright chestnut with four white stockings, having gained his name because he was always "in the air," never starting off without a fine show of bucking, sometimes leaving the ground all four feet at once. But Airship was beautiful with a beauty which still makes my heart beat when I think of him.

Waldorf also secured ponies for the children. He was their idol, they worshipped "Mr. Anne," as for some unknown reason they called him, and many are the adventurous riding parties we undertook together.

We also climbed the Sinaia mountains and camped amongst the clouds in low, military tents; we visited the different studs of the country and Waldorf taught me much about horse-breeding and pedigrees. All things were full of interest to us and I took my friends about as much as I was allowed, but in those days motors were only just beginning and we did not yet possess one of our own; besides, our excursions were limited by King Carol's will.

Four years of perfect friendship, sharing all things—I look back upon them with delight and gratitude. They were almost cloudless, but of course life was waiting for my friends and finally parted us. Pauline married first, then Waldorf two years later, if I rightly remember. I cannot say that great loneliness did not remain in their wake, but life is full of uprooting and renunciations. Nothing could destroy our friendship, but the dear close comradeship had of course come to an end; only the fervent gratitude remained for what had been so good.

Little by little as the years passed and my children became bigger, my life broadened and different friendships were cemented with the people of my country.

The wildly worldly life I have been supposed to live is a legend invented by those who vaguely heard rumours about my fine clothes and so-called eccentricities. For many I was “la Princesse Lointaine,” living in a country near the Rising Sun; this fired the imagination, and the moment a woman is spoken of as “pretty” people want to know all about her, she excites interest more than anything else and gossip would have it that I was tremendously gay, whilst in reality our life was curiously austere and circumscribed.

The truth is that I had a profound and invincible *joie de vivre* which could not be overlooked and which no disapproval or hedging in had been able to suppress. Wherever I went, I carried with me this air of enjoying life, everything was interest and stimulation to me, so I quite naturally also stimulated those with whom I came in contact. Irresistibly they found themselves carried away on the wave of my enthusiasms without pausing to consider why. I myself had no particular reason for this extreme vitality except my prodigious health and love of nature and all things beautiful.

There certainly were times when my artistic temperament made me indulge in clothes somewhat different from what were usually worn, sometimes too showy or picturesque, I believe. But my excuse is that we women of my day still more or less belonged to *les Romantiques*; besides, Roumania was only a half-discovered country and all that was rumoured concerning it had the prestige of distance and the unexplored. Also I had an imaginative and daring mind and being buried away from the part of Europe I had been born to, I adopted my own ways and

style, regardless of criticism, rather dangerously indifferent to anything but my passion for beauty.

Roumania is a land of poetry and, being barred from much I had been accustomed to, I finally created my own atmosphere which was approved or disapproved of according to the temper of my critics.

I was in what might be called my "prime" when several young women more or less of my own age came into my life, Nadèje Stirbey, Maruka Cantacuzène, Hélène Soutzo, Hélène Crețianu, Sybil Chrissoveloni, Marthe Bibescu and others, and although there were still occasional rows and prohibitions instigated by the ever-watchful and never-disarmed enemy in the "Old Palace," I was less severely controlled than formerly. The truth was that King Carol and I were gradually becoming friends. He began to trust me and I understood him better.

Maruka Cantacuzène was foremost amongst this group of friends now gathered around me; she was a Rosetti by birth, a Moldavian of blue blood. Tall, handsome, dark-eyed, exceedingly striking, she could occasionally be erratic and was certainly an original. Her company was stimulating but it was no good going against her queer ideas. Married to Michel, eldest son of Georges Cantacuzène, known as the "Nabab," she was rich and independent and lived exactly as she pleased, quite indifferent to critics. For instance, nothing would induce her to accept an invitation; it was always in her salon that she expected us to gather, and being one of those people who get their own way, we submitted to her smiling tyranny and many a pleasant evening have we spent in her darkened rooms, for Maruka had manias and one of these was to sit in the half-dark. A big fire would be lit on the hearth, no other illumination being allowed. This more than once gave rise to comic incidents, as Maruka would occasionally invite outsiders who were not initiated into the special rites of her sacred salon. These, unaccustomed to such dim chambers, would stumble over the stools and chairs before they could grope their way to where we sat.

We mostly came together to listen to good music, our well-known violinist and composer Enescu being the great friend of the house, and many a delightful hour have I spent beside Maruka's fire, silent whilst he held us beneath the spell of his magic bow.

It must however be confessed that my friend had an almost perverse



MY FRIEND MARUKA CANTACUZÈNE



PAULINE ASTOR DRESSED AS A ROUMANIAN GYPSY
(SNAPSHOT TAKEN BY MYSELF)



IN 1907 AT COTROCENI

liking for the absurd in every form. She would take herself seriously up to a certain point and beyond this everything was a huge joke, including her manias, habits and restrictions, and when together we often laughed like two schoolgirls, and it was always Maruka who used to create the absurd situations, and everybody had to join in with the laughter, even the most serious diplomats.

When I think back on certain incidents in Maruka's darkened chambers I am still inclined to laugh even though all by myself.

One evening a short-sighted lady, groping amongst the furniture for her fur, found herself tugging at the tousled hair of an exhausted pianist who was dozing in a deep armchair, whereupon shrieks of delighted laughter on the part of our hostess.

One day, this was many years later—after the War—Maruka had moved into a large house where she had arranged a huge sort of divan draped in red brocade. I was seated at one end of this throne-like construction and she at the other. Whilst Enescu played there was of course perfect silence but my friend, always full of absurd ideas, decided that we should be connected through a silken "scarf" of which I should hold the one end, she the other, and through this binding piece of silk we would silently communicate our emotions to each other. It was quite a Marukian idea, characteristic of her amusing turn of mind. Between the two corners where she and I sat enthroned there was ample space for others, and from time to time my friend would call one or the other of the guests to come up and talk to us.

It occasionally amused her to have what she called a pompous party, including diplomats, politicians, professors, doctors and elderly ladies. She liked me to come to these and help her deal out amiabilities and never shall I forget how on the day of the silken "scarf," she all of a sudden beckoned to a very portly and important foreign Minister to come and talk to us. Much pleased, our ally lowered his tremendous bulk on the couch between us, turning first this way and then that so as to be amiable to both of us at the same time. Suddenly Maruka remembered our silken link, and stretched out her hand for her end of it, but the circumference of the gentleman embedded on the soft couch had so diminished the length of our scarf, that there was none of it left, the weight of the diplomat had made it shrink to nothing. Although we were both of us much more staid ladies in those days, the discovery

was so absurd that Maruka gave vent to one of her most ringing fits of laughter, the innocent guest quite ignorant of what had suddenly moved her to such tremendous and unexpected mirth.

There was a whole-hearted, spontaneous absurdity about Maruka which made of her a delightful companion.

Michel Cantacuzène, her husband, was a kindly gentleman, who was half-shocked, half-amused at his wife's unconventionalities. Occasionally he wanted to be pompous, but Maruka always took the wind out of his sails, there was no standing up against her laughter.

Michel Cantacuzène was killed a few years ago in a motor accident and Maruka shut up her fine house with the red-draped couch, and there are no more meetings in her darkened chambers: she has become almost a recluse, but harking back I can still hear her wonderful laugh and can also see the heavy diplomat sitting on our silken scarf; *mais tout passe*. . . .

Hélène Soutzo was quite a different type. A Chrissoveloni by birth, she was of Greek origin and had something of a Tanagra about her appearance; a small head, carried proudly upon a very upright neck, above very upright shoulders, a figure of perfect proportions and a face with clear-cut, classical features. Everything about Hélène was clear-cut, the straight direct look of her eyes, the clear, precise enunciation of her words, her concise, never confused appreciation of things, situations and people. Her deportment in general was sure, correct, pleasantly ironical and somewhat fastidious. A great deal of care had been expended on her education, she spoke several languages fluently and was deeply read. Living often in Paris she moved about in literary and aristocratic circles and was a perfect *femme-du-monde*. Although vastly different from our erratic and light-shy Maruka, they were great friends, and when in Roumania Hélène often came to our *clair-obscur* evening in Maruka's rooms.

Jean Chrissoveloni, Hélène's brother, an exceedingly clever young man, had married an English girl, a Miss Yovell; she also belonged to our circle and her gay, impulsive, uncalculating Anglo-Saxon nature was in charming contrast with her more sophisticated sister-in-law. Sybil, like her beautiful sister, Mrs. Bennett, was a magnificent specimen of humanity. Tall, fair, always on the go, gay, kind-hearted, impulsive,

she had a splendid figure and a milk-white skin; she moved superbly and every inch of her was brilliantly alive and healthy. Her teeth were white and strong, her laugh catching, her eyes brown as mountain burns and there was a delicious tilt to her small and delicate nose. In fact Sybil was irresistible, one of those beings who according to the old song must have been born "on a sunshiny morning."

No one wore her clothes more perfectly than Sybil, there was an air of triumphant prosperity about her that was invigorating. Generous, artless, over-credulous, in spite of her worldly goods life was not always kind to Sybil, but when taken in or deceived her pain and indignation was that of a child and was expressed in so many words. Sybil was one of those who are "clean of spirit" and I loved her dearly.

But Sybil is now under the ground.

Nadèje Stirbey mostly lived in the country; she was seldom amongst us in Maruka's salon.

She was and is the perfect type of wife and mother, living for her family. I loved going to her house, and both her husband and her children were my friends. In her company the darker side of life fell away. There was something of a bird or a butterfly about Nadèje. She was always singing and gay, always busy, happy, for ever on the move, surrounded by loving attention, here, there and everywhere, in her house, her garden, her kitchen, with her children, her servants, her peasants; her hands were always full of some sort of work, painting, writing, embroidering, gardening. She had no high ambitions, she was contented with her own world without searching for impossible improvements, nor was it her desire to climb giddy heights. A pleasant, welcoming hostess, a gay, care-free companion, she had the secret of putting from her all that could sadden and complicate her life, without striving for anything beyond her reach—Nadèje is one of the only completely happy women I ever met.

in great contrast to happy, care-free Nadèje, with her child's soul and simple, contented ways, was her much younger sister-in-law, Marthe Bibescu, who at the early age of sixteen had married Nadèje's brother, Georges Valentin Bibescu.

Born a Lahovari, Marthe was one of four sisters, her father, Jean

Lahovari, being brother to Alexander and Jaques Lahovari whom I mentioned when speaking of the Conservative Ministers. Marthe's soul had come into the world already wise and weighted with knowledge. Even as a little girl Marthe was already grown up.

I knew her as a little girl during my first years in Roumania, for there was just ten years difference between us. I used to call her "Pony" in contrast to her elder sister Jeanne to whom I had given the less flattering name of "*Âne*"; and in those far-off days I, the fair young princess from Great Britain, was "Pony's" ideal.

From earliest childhood Marthe showed signs of beauty and always dreamed of "grandeurs." The great of this world, royal or otherwise, interested her beyond measure. Great names, great success, great talent, fabulous careers, all these things fascinated the little girl with the big brown eyes and eager, inquiring brain. I liked to have her with me, she was so interesting, so stimulating and the adoration she had for me was pleasant to my young vanity. I had a great name and two long rows of ancestors from the opposite sides of Europe looked down upon me; all this Marthe knew, knew it even better than I did, for Marthe, like all the Lahovaris, was a real encyclopædia even at that early age. Her memory was remarkable, she never forgot or missed anything; even when she was a child I had the feeling that I was with a soul much older than mine. There was nothing naïve about "Pony," her eyes were watchful, her brain ever at work.

The pretty little girl grew into an exceedingly attractive woman, almost into a beauty in fact; with her large, short-sighted eyes, and queer, large mouth, there was something Circe-like about her fascination. "Character is destiny." Marthe meant to advance and succeed, and this she did. She attracted into her life those things of which she dreamed. She became acquainted with those whose names are foremost in our striving, changing world of to-day. Little by little she grouped people of talent and interest around her. Her keen mind is open to every social advantage, she entertains royalty, diplomats, politicians, artists, writers, scientists and aristocrats. She travels in many lands and her hosts are always amongst the most select and renowned, and as when she was a little girl and I called her "Pony," her ears and her eyes are wide open, she absorbs and never forgets anything she sees and hears. And Marthe has become a much-talked-of and appreciated writer, a writer admired

by the most critical critics. Her French is faultless, her style delicately perfect; the pictures she evokes are rich and full of poetry, her books are wise and deeply studied and every sentence is polished like a precious stone.

Nothing is lost to her busy brain, her every quotation shows deep thought, and incredible erudition and an astonishing knowledge of each subject she treats; nothing is left to chance or caprice.

All that is beautiful moves her, and she finds rare words in which to describe what she sees and hears; it was this shared love of the beautiful which made of us close companions for many years.

We both loved gardening and flowers, loved planning quaint and original interiors; we loved collecting old stones and discovering queer, unexplored corners, old churches, forsaken houses, and all those things so full of charm for which many have no eyes at all. We liked books and poetry and beautiful colours and the sound of bells in the distance; yes, we had much in common, but as life advanced our roads gradually deviated, her ambition took another direction, the same things were no more equally important to us both.

Thus does life occasionally play tricks with friendships. . . .

Hélène Crețianu, later Hélène Moruzi, was quite another type. She loved country life, she loved riding and hunting, and all she did was done with energy and conviction and endless light good-humour. Slim, wiry, with delicious naturally waving hair, her brilliant eyes always looked amused and she emphasized all she said with expressive gestures of her hands. There was just a touch of boyish mischievousness about her which made her rather a handful for her first husband, who was a staid and rather solemn diplomat. She would never allow him to be as important as he felt himself to be; this *à la longue* was, of course, not very conducive to good understanding and she was much better suited to the elegant cavalry officer she married later.

In her youth, being much absent from the country, I saw less of her, in fact we were never much together; but a mutual feeling of sympathy bound us together whenever we met: it was a spontaneous friendship which does not lessen with the years.

Now Hélène Moruzi's wavy hair is turning grey. She manages her own estate with quite masculine efficiency, but her eyes have remained

just as sparkling and life has not blighted her sense of fun; to-day, as in her early youth, she loves to laugh over her exploits which are now mostly amidst field and peasant, amidst her animals, her gardens, her flowers, vegetables, wheat and maize. Hélène Moruzi is a breezy, healthy, refreshing personality.

There were still other friends of different kinds and at different periods of my life such as Symky Lahovari, who later became my lady-in-waiting, Vidine Palady, who had so much to say on every subject and to-day is the principal leader of our feministic movement, the two pretty Ferikydi daughters, Irene and Anna, Hélène Odalescu and Letta Cantacuzène, but these were the principal women who surrounded me when, towards 1907, King Carol began to admit me as a personality he had not only learnt to like but whom, in a way, he began to appreciate. The education he submitted me to was unyielding, but with the years came on my part a better understanding of his "whys and wherefores" and a real admiration for his qualities as man and king, and on his, a gradual realization that I could be trusted if not too severely coerced. I had to be ridden with a light rein, a too severe curb made me either rear or pull. There was also this, that he was getting old and felt at last a certain pleasure in being surrounded by young and pleasant faces. My group of friends was a little different from those who sat year in year out at Aunt's feet. We were more out-of-door, fresh-air people, and he instinctively felt a breeziness in this change of atmosphere introduced by his irrepressible niece.

His distrust of me and my methods was subsiding; he saw that I was beginning to understand what was expected of me, especially he realized how year by year I was learning to love the country more profoundly. He sensed in me the making of a patriot, one who could be fired by the needs and aspirations of a people.

I had neither the patience nor the discipline to do exactly as he and the old Queen had done before me, I was of my time as they had been of theirs; besides, there was the fundamental difference of race and upbringing, but for all my love of independence, I had a strong sense of duty and upon this Uncle knew he could finally count even if he could not obtain obedience to every rule.

The strongest link of all was our children; he loved them dearly and found for them all the indulgence he had never found for us.

The choice of friends is supposed to be a revelation of character: *dis-moi qui tu hantes, et je te dirai qui tu es*. My friends were very dissimilar, I had, so to say, a friend for every mood. This was once commented upon by a lady not devoid of jealousy in a none too kindly way.

I was joking with Maruka, allowing her to propound one of her newest theories. (Maruka was always riding some hobby-horse and we, her adherents, were always having earnestly to discuss her most recent opinions upon this, that or the next thing. Maruka loved debating, and we enjoyed her queer arguments.)

The morose lady, listening to our animated discussion, looked on with disapproval; she disliked my versatility of spirit, and the fun I could derive out of Maruka's glorious nonsense was one of her chief annoyances. Being a distant relation of my friend, she considered herself justified in voicing her pent-up irritation in these none too amiable words: "If I were you, my dear Maruka, I would cease being so absurd; have you not yet discovered that the Princess is merely using you, all of you, as a set of puppets, pulling the strings of each of you in turn, for her own amusement?"

This was certainly a very ungracious thing to say, slighting to my friend and scathing to me. Luckily Maruka was equal to the occasion; she broke into one of her most irresistible peals of laughter: "Puppets are we? I never particularly saw myself in that light, but if it is so, I am only too pleased to be one of the Princess's puppets, because I thoroughly enjoy it." *Pantin* was the exact word the disapproving lady used.

No, the accusation was entirely unjustified; I never looked upon my friends as "puppets," each was dear and precious to me in her own way. I was many-sided, no doubt, my interests were varied and manifold, and because I care for poetry and could read Nietzsche and listen to good music, it did not mean that I could not find delight in gardening or be interested in Paris fashions, or in the cooking of a good cake, or in how many guns an artillery regiment needed, or what the Emperor of China wore for his coronation.

I did not profess to be an authority on any subject, not even on the upbringing of children or how a princess should enter a room; I had no theories and never mixed up in other people's affairs, nor pressed my

opinion upon them. What I had was a keen brain, a quick perception and an ever alive and joyful interest in all things; nothing was beneath my attention. The little man's joys and pains were as real to me as the big statesman's scheme. My sympathy was quickly awakened, I was "all there" on ever occasion. Because I could understand a mother's delight over her first-born and could share her ecstasy, did not prevent my reading a serious book, or laughing at a funny joke, being interested in the way a bridge was built, never hindered my enjoying a good gallop or the excitement of a fast motor, nor the climbing of a mountain, nor the designing of a new room, nor listening to a dissertation upon architecture, navigation, or upon the right theory about horse-breeding. I had not a specially cultured brain, but it was receptive and above all my interest in life and humanity was paramount.

Because I felt at home in Maruka's fire-lit chamber it did not prevent my taking an interest in Nadèje's children, in Hélène Moruzi's roses, in Hélène Soutzo's Paris successes, nor in Marthe's latest book. In my heart of hearts I may have preferred the company of one friend to another, but my joy to be with them in turns was genuine and whole-hearted.

Other friends will be spoken of later as my story advances along with the years.

CHAPTER XXI

YEARS OF DISCOVERY

THE description of my friends has led me to a later date, but I must go back again to earlier times as there are still a few things to relate about these years of education when all was discovery.

We were allowed about six weeks' holiday a year and although there were occasional deviations from the rule, late summer or early autumn was the time assigned to us, especially in later years when everything became scheduled.

Whilst my father still lived we were allowed to visit my parents at Clarence House and thus I had once or twice the joy of a London season, a thing I had never had before my marriage, having married too young. And once, after the birth of my two eldest children, there was an unforgettable month spent at Osborne, in a cottage lent to us by Grandmamma Queen so that my children could enjoy the sea-air. Ducky, then Grand Duchess of Hesse, shared the cottage with me and she also had brought her baby girl and it was pure joy being once more in the cherished places of our childhood.

There was the beloved beach with its shells, there were the coast-guards and their boat, the slippery pier with its many-coloured seaweed; there was the inebriating smell of the sun-warmed woods, of the honeysuckle and wild roses in the hedges and, above all, there was dear Grandmamma Queen at breakfast under her green-lined tent-parasol, surrounded by her Indians, Highlanders and admirably trained dogs. But to-day it was the turn of our children to be led up by white-clad nurses to kiss Her Majesty's hand.

Grandmamma took a kindly interest in this younger generation, which had to appear daily at her breakfast and she was full of searching inquiries about our new homes and general behaviour.

The re-exploration of all we had loved as children was exquisite delight; the beach, the woods, the gardens, parks, farms, and the cele-

brated Swiss Cottage with its garden plots, its white lilies and the fascinating museum of all the things collected by Papa and his brothers—the blue butterflies, the flexible stone, the wonderful fan-shells.

We had a small one-horse pony trap which we used to drive in turns. Our married independence was still new to us and we enjoyed it like children on a holiday. The crunch of our carriage wheels off and on to the old ferry which led to Cowes had lost none of its charm, and we poked about in the little shops, looking for presents for the sailors who had now become our children's slaves as they had once been ours. We had swimming competitions and hunted for shells, and I remember that it was in one of Grandmamma's gardens that I first saw a Criméon Rambler in full bloom and how I stood before it as before a miracle—rambler roses were still rare in those days.

Ducky and I travelled back together, Grandmamma having lent us her yacht *H.M.S. Osborne* for the crossing, and we visited Middelburg in Holland, a picturesque old sea-town where all the girls and boys still wear their delightful costumes: real post-card children, almost too good to be true.

I stopped also at Darmstadt and spent several days at Wolfsgarten, the Grand Duke of Hesse's favourite country house, a wonderful place for riding, with sandy roads under endless stretches of woods.

The Darmstadt stables were renowned for their first-rate horses of every kind, from the light-footed Arab to the heavy Irish hunter. My sister was a splendid horsewoman and as the house was always full of guests there were many gay riding parties even by moonlight when the forest became ghost-like and strange, so that it was difficult to stick to the road.

Darmstadt was a great meeting-place for all the family and also for other royalties less nearly related. The Tsar and his wife, Uncle Serge and Aunt Ella, came as often as they could, both the Tsarina and Aunt Ella being Ernie's sisters. I thoroughly enjoyed the life at Wolfsgarten: it was so full of fun and one met so many pleasant and interesting people. Above all I loved the riding and the beautiful flowers; the gardens were ablaze with the finest and rarest kinds. Ducky and I were always painting and drawing when we were not on horseback or amongst the flowers.

There was also another great joy; Ducky had a wonderful collection



MY SISTER "DUCKY" AT WOLFSGARTEN WITH ONE OF HER FAVORITE HORSES



"DUCKY" AND I IN OUR YOUNGER DAYS

of white Lipizaner horses which were harnessed Hungarian-wise with attractive trappings. She drove four, sometimes five and even six-in-hand, and it was a lovely sight to see these light-footed, Arab-like horses come tripping through the forest.

Once, a few years later, I had to undergo a cure at Bad Schwalbach, a pretty but dull little place not far from Darmstadt. Here I had to take mud-baths, very efficacious, but I thoroughly disliked having to get into the slimy black stuff which had, into the bargain, an unpleasant odour. Always glad of any pretext to be together, Ducky obtained permission to visit me so as to lighten the ennui of the cure, and she brought with her her carriage and four white horses, much, of course, to the excitement of the "Kurgäste."

Every afternoon we took long drives through the pretty and wooded surroundings, generally getting out somewhere to make our tea. Thermos bottles had not yet been invented, so we boiled our tea over a spirit lamp. Faithful Gretchen was with us and we were a much more harmless trio than we were supposed to be. The four white horses attracted attention, so we were considered "fast." There was, however, nothing fast about us except the pace of our horses, which were fleet-footed and not heavy roadsters, but in those days whatever we did used to bring censure down upon our heads, we seemed to have the faculty of shocking our betters.

There was in particular a drive to the Frankfurt races (this was after the cure, and I was spending a few days at Wolfsgarten before returning home) which has remained notorious.

We decided to go in grand style. At the head of the Darmstadt stables was a kindly and what we considered elderly gentleman, Herr von Riedesel. Delighted that my sister had such a passion for horses which gave special importance to his beautifully run stables, he was her most devoted slave and liked to turn out her carriages and riding-horses as perfectly as possible.

This was an excellent occasion to do his best, and to do honour to carriage and horses we decided to dress with as much *chic* as we could, but in our own special style which often met with disapproval. Our "get-up" was to be simple but striking, and I must describe it as later on, having been denounced by an aunt who wrote too often to our mother, we both of us in turn received severely reproving letters from

our parent in which we were scolded for our "sinful love of dress," and our "affectation of wanting to look different from other princesses."

The offending garments consisted of plain white cloth skirts, which were then worn long and bell-shaped, and neat little tailor-made jackets in contrasting colours. Ducky's jacket was dull mauve and mine dead turquoise, an exquisite colour between green and blue. These jackets were perfectly cut and finished off with crystal buttons; our hats, shoes and gloves were white to match the skirts, and under our chins we had tied broad white tulle bows, as it was not yet the fashion to have a bare neck; these diaphanous bows were considered exceedingly "smart." But when we came down to the garden court-yard ready to climb into our high vehicle our attention was attracted by a pot of huge blue and mauve hydrangeas standing on the terrace steps, and suddenly the idea came to us that one of these showy globular flowers worn as a bouquet on the front of our jackets would give an extra *chic* touch to our neat turnout. I suppose it was this unexpected finishing touch that was considered the most reprehensible.

It must be confessed that we *did* look very nice perched side by side on our high box, the dark and the fair sister, in our dull blue and mauve coats which were so pleasantly harmonious, two neat grooms seated back to back with us, the four lovely horses speeding along, their attractive trappings swinging about as they ran. Ducky of course was driving.

We reaped all the success we had expected and when, later on, the storm of reproach whirled about our ears, we consoled ourselves by imagining that the real reason for the critical aunt's disapproval was that our *chic* simplicity had outshone the more heavy finery donned by others for the same occasion. Anyhow, no future disapproval could take from us the conviction that we had looked our best.

Our holidays, according to well-established and not-to-be-misunderstood royal desire, were to be spent between Sigmaringen, Coburg or later Tegernsee, where after our father's death, Mamma had bought herself a charming house, perched on a hill overlooking the lake. Any deviation from this rule or inclination towards any unexpected ideas of our own, any desire towards variation, was severely nipped in the bud.

Although I dearly loved my father-in-law I cannot say that I par-

ticularly cared for my visits to Sigmaringen ; besides, as I was destined to live all the year round in my husband's family, when at last I had a holiday I naturally preferred being with my own people, and every day spent away from them seemed a waste of the precious and all too short six weeks granted us.

In the summer my parents-in-law went to the little country *Schloss* where we had spent our few "honey days," and towards autumn they would move over to Weinburg, an old house they possessed in Switzerland near Lake Constance. In both these places there used to be family gatherings and our children came together with their Hohenzollern cousins under the kindly eye of their grandfather whom they adored, as did everybody else.

But in spite of my fascinating father-in-law, the life at Krauchenwies was rather dull. The place was very pretty, a large park which adjoined a fir wood surrounding the several houses ; there were gardens and meadows and plenty of wild flowers, but we were tormented by mosquitoes and I remember my despair when they stung my precious Mignon when she was a fat and superbly pink-and-white baby of one year, making her peach-like cheeks look like a plum pudding !

My mother-in-law, more and more of a confirmed invalid, joined the family only for lunch. Being exceedingly fond of dress she insisted that this midday meal be turned into a smart affair, and although we were in the depths of the country we had to appear in sort of garden-party clothes at half-past twelve each day.

I have a somewhat unhappy remembrance of our overdressed little party, which included Hofmarschal, doctor, A.D.C. and elderly ladies-in-waiting, all gathered together for the classical game of skittles after lunch. I still have a vision of my mother-in-law in stiff, rustling silk, with strangely small and narrow bust upon over-large hips, weakly swinging the heavy wooden ball attached to a string. Her feet were too small for her weight so her gait was slow and faltering ; her hands were beautiful but had the groping, somewhat uncertain movements of those who continually receive too much help, and are therefore unaccustomed to do things for themselves. I also see myself, slightly rebellious in periwinkle-coloured moiré, considering this festive attire unsuitable for a game of skittles, except perhaps in a Watteau picture.

I see my father-in-law, charming, conciliatory, amiable with every-

one in turn, exceedingly polite even with his sons, eager to make a success of the gathering. I see my two brothers-in-law; William, jovial, fat, but without his wife, as they had agreed more or less to live apart; Carlo, long, thin, too fair and too well pleased with his own good looks and adored by his much superior wife, Josephine, who, alas, like her father the Count of Flanders, was almost stone-deaf. I see neat little *Täntchen*, who wore such high collars that they seemed to be strangling her. She was none too fond of her sister-in-law, Fürstin Antonia, and did not always spare her sarcasm, but she loved her nieces and was loved by them as was dear *Onkelchen* with his comfortable, drawling voice.

I see Nando very much on holiday with a too large cigar in his mouth (in Germany everybody smoked too large cigars), Nando, spoilt by his mother, who hoped to make me jealous because of the attentions she showered upon him and Josephine, leaving me out in the cold.

Fürstin Antonia was a rather uncomfortable lady. No one except her husband, and in a vaguer way her sons, cared very much for her; she was an egoist and could be exceedingly irritating, but her artistic side and her great love of flowers made a bond between us which stood me in good stead, even when my feeling of irritation took the upper hand. Her narrow Catholicism was trying, and still more her continual belittling of her neighbour and praise of her own virtues. She was not a clever but a talented woman. She never, however, managed to make mischief between Josephine and myself, we were both too staunch and loyal to each other, though life did not bring us much together.

My closest friend in the Sigmaringen household was Frifri, a distant cousin of my husband's, the granddaughter of a great-aunt, a Teveggi by birth, an orphan whom my parents-in-law were bringing up: she later married Baron Geier, their A.D.C.

Frifri and I had much in common. Her Italian vivacity was most refreshing and when she was at Sigmaringen it made my stay much more amusing. We were a great deal together, we both loved poetry and art in general, we read the latest books; besides, her talk was animated and witty. Nando had a great affection for Frifri and we asked her to Roumania more than once. She also tried to ride, but this we called *la passion malheureuse* because she was mortally frightened on a horse and kept asking me what face her horse was making, as if accord-

ing to his expression one could guess if he had good or bad intentions. Never before or after did anyone ever ask me what faces his horse was making!

Guests were continually coming to Sigmaringen, and once old Queen Carola of Saxony arrived for a few days, a kindly, exceeding religious old lady whose figure was somewhat out of drawing. The old Grand Duke and Grand Duchess of Baden were also great friends of the family and numerous other members of German royal houses.

As soon as I dared run away from Sigmaringen without offending Nando and his parents, I rushed off to Mamma and then only did my yearly holiday really begin. Before Mamma bought Sengerschloss, the house at Tegernsee, it was generally at the beloved Rosenau that we would meet, the Rosenau with its round tower and Gothic gables; the Rosenau with its cosy small rooms, its quaintly-painted walls, its discreet lamplight and familiar smell of straw matting; the Rosenau with its sound of the splashing fountain and of the old gardener raking the already too tidy paths; the Rosenau with its wide meadows, with its roses and green lawn before the house and Mamma sitting under the old maple tree. Yes, I loved every inch of the Rosenau.

Once there was a visit to Reinhardsbrunn, near Gotha, and then to Oberhof, two shooting-places beloved of my father. Mamma, having to go to Russia, left me to keep house for Papa; I felt very proud, for being as a rule far away, this honour seldom fell to my share.

After my father's death of course many things changed. Alfred died before his father, so it was the son of the Duke of Albany, Papa's nephew, who became Duke of Coburg. Mamma then bought Tegernsee, and although my heart still clung to the Rosenau, the date of my holiday generally coincided with the season Mamma spent at Tegernsee.

Tegernsee had the great advantage of being near Munich, and being somewhat starved in all that concerned art, these holidays were occasions when I could drink my fill of music, exhibitions and picture galleries.

Munich is one of the few towns that are really delightful in summer; it is never too hot and its excellent exhibitions and manifold theatres attract many foreigners. It was always full of gay faces and happy people all intent upon artistic pleasures.

There was something special about my arrival at Munich for my

yearly holiday. Mamma was usually already awaiting me at the old Russischer Hof, which suited her tastes, as she detested new and fashionable hotels. On the way to Tegernsee from the Rosenau she generally spent a few days at Munich, allowing her servants time to negotiate the change of residence. She, too, thoroughly enjoyed Munich with its picture exhibitions and theatres, and she also loved shopping and going to art dealers.

A delightful holiday feeling took possession of me the moment my feet touched the Munich pavement: there was a special thrill in stepping out of the hotel door as free as air, no one to protest or forbid, no one to control or object. And then to know that there was Mamma to return to, Mamma who liked you to have a good time and who took such a keen interest in all your exploits, Mamma who encouraged your activities and never wanted you to sit still. It was only occasionally that she joined in with our activities, but she liked to see us enjoy ourselves and be continually on the move. She used to speak of "Missy's agitations," but when I did not "agitate" she was exceedingly disappointed. Loss of time was unbearable to her. There was one thing that made her angry and that was when we were late for meals. The hours of lunch and dinner were sacred.

Of course there was always one or the other of my sisters there, especially Baby Bee, and it was with her that I most enjoyed the Wagner representations at the Prinzregententheater. We were both of us deep Wagner-lovers and the whole atmosphere of the Prinzregententheater had something special about it; it was almost like going to church. I liked sitting in the first row if possible, as near the stage as I could, so as to be in direct contact with the singers. The bewitching music rising out of the dark, almost beneath one's feet, filled me with a rapture only those who have felt it can appreciate. I confess to having a special weakness for the *Walküre* and declare that if Wagner had never written anything but "Wotan's Abschied" and the "Feuerzauber" he would still be a genius. But there were parts in each of his operas which transported me into another sphere, which thrilled through me, entirely detaching me from this world; such as "Waldweben" in *Siegfried*, the funeral march in *Götterdämmerung*, the passage of the Gods into Walhalla in *Rheingold* and the "Winterstürme" (the love song in the first act of the *Walküre*), echoes of which steal again into the most tragic



ELISABETHA IN HER TWELFTH YEAR



MY SISTER BEATRICE, CALLED "BABY"

moments of the later acts. There is also the second act of *Tristan* which I have always declared I never really heard but only felt, to such a degree does it shudder through every part of your being. And the *Meistersinger* with its "Preislied," and *Parsifal* with its prodigious overture, its "Karfreitagszauber" and heavenly final "Erlösung." But in those days *Parsifal* was not given in Munich but exclusively in Bayreuth, and I was never able to get to Bayreuth, as I could not get away from home soon enough in the season.

The walking about between the acts was very amusing in the Prinzregententheater. As in Bayreuth, you met any number of acquaintances from many countries. It was the fashion to dress smartly for these representations and the long *entr'actes* became a real dress parade where everybody sauntered round and round the little garden, staring at each other with occasional amused or joyful exclamations of recognition.

I remember a certain white dress and willow green cloak I liked appearing in, a becoming attire which never passed unnoticed. Baby was a perfectly delightful companion, exceedingly witty and full of fun; we had a high time together, our holiday mood giving zest to the most trivial event.

Baby was extremely musical and was a greater authority on Wagner than I was and, later, when she married the Infante Alfonso of Orleans-Bourbon, they became passionate devotees of Bayreuth; there was not a note of the music nor a word of the libretto that they did not know by heart.

Ali, as we called her husband, was quite one of the most perfect human beings I have ever met. At first, my sister being a Protestant, there were great difficulties about their marriage and for a time he was not allowed to reappear in Spain, so they remained with Mamma, but that is a whole story of its own and cannot find place in these pages. They were a delightful and original couple, stimulating company, amusing, unconventional and always full of quaint principles and ideas. But she was still unmarried in those happy Prinzregententheater days.

The life at Tegernsee was very quiet, the place beautiful and a paradise for the children, and the long hours in the evening when we used to read with Mamma hours of profound content. The last time we all met at Tegernsee was in 1913, after my little Mircea's birth.

CHAPTER XXII

MORE CORONATIONS: EDWARD VII; GEORGE V

HAVING at the beginning of this volume described the Moscow Coronation I feel that I must also speak of King Edward's and King George's Coronations, at both of which we were present, officially deputed to represent our country.

The years have passed and in my mind these two coronations somewhat run into each other although ten years lay between them.

Just as magnificent in their way as those of Russia, there was, however, a soberness about the London festivities which contrasted with Moscow's more Oriental splendour. Here too there were unique traditions and ceremonies harking back to much older times; there was a display of might, but it had not that touch of the fantastic which everything took on at Moscow.

Here the King and Queen drove in a golden coach just as beautiful as the Russian coaches; the cream-coloured horses, with their superb trappings of red leather and that touch of lavender blue decorating their manes, were, I think, finer than the white horses harnessed to the two Empresses' carriages. The troops were smarter, if less picturesque, the men more handsome, the Indians a wonderful display, but although London had gone mad with enthusiasm there was about it all the sober aspect of complete civilization, also the soberness of the London setting, a dignified monochrome in spite of its thousand flags.

I love the way London hangs out her flags, right across the street from one side to another so that the royal processions seem to be driving under a ceiling of ever-moving rainbow colours.

And then Westminster Abbey, sombre for all the superbness of its time-darkened Gothic; half-tones—greys, blacks and browns—in place of Moscow's golden shrines. Sober also the chants, more angelic perhaps but less overwhelming than those stupendous Russian bass voices

chanting without instrumental accompaniment, which have a way of troubling the soul and making the heart beat. The royal guests sat in the Gothic choir stalls, a perfect setting, framing each bejewelled personage, fitting them into their background. I too sat here, at my husband's side, and was fascinated by the solemn beauty, by the order and dignity of the different processions, the Peers of the realm, the Princes and Princesses of the Royal House, the Prince of Wales, the high clergy and, finally, the King and Queen. The chants rose higher and higher like an angel chorus, filling the old building with hymns of praise and thanksgiving.

We were so placed that we could not see the whole of the ceremony, but this I need not describe as it is well enough known in its every detail. It passed before my gaze in a series of perfect pictures and through it all a feeling of well-established and undisputed might, representing the Nation's feeling, based upon a granite-like tenacity of tradition and respect. No tragedy lay beneath, no sense of fear or sacrifice. The Queens' faces were serene, almost unmoved, the thrones they were mounting were, if I can so express it, seats of peace.

Irresistibly the vision of the young Empress rose before me, standing rigidly upright, her golden robes flowing from her shoulders, her face flushed, her eyes tragic, her lips tightly set as though at bay.

Queen Alexandra and Queen Mary: two serene figures, imbued with all the dignity of Royalty, lovely faces of calm assurance; their crowns, although weighted by a hundred gems, did not seem to oppress them, nor to be unduly heavy, there was an established security about these queens which made you feel glad for them, not afraid.

Perhaps I am too inclined to see a symbol in everything, the depths lying beneath the quiet surface, so that I cannot remain purely descriptive; I seem to see more than the naked eye perceives.

Besides, so much has happened since.

But King Edward VII's Coronation had its moment of tragedy, illness having suddenly felled the monarch at the very hour of his greatest glory, so that the date of the ceremony had to be put off.

There was something powerfully dramatic about this event. Princes and envoys from all the four corners of the earth had gathered together to do honour to the man whose brow was to receive the symbol of

earthly power, and at that very hour he could not be with us but had to lie down under the surgeon's knife. His life hung in the balance, and the festive flags had to be hauled down.

How well I can remember beautiful Queen Alexandra receiving the guests. I can still see the anxiety beneath her smile. We had not been told what was going on, and our eyes kept watching the door through which the King was to appear, Uncle Bertie, that welcoming, self-assured gentleman with his debonair air of royal good-fellowship.

It was Cousin Victoria, his daughter, who had always remained at home with her parents, who finally told me that "dear Papa was very ill." It was a terrible shock, it came without warning and had about it an almost theatrical suddenness. The situation was indeed dramatic, and it must have needed much tact to deal with it diplomatically, not to frighten people too much and to make those who had come to rejoice realize that there could be no rejoicing, anyhow not for awhile.

Beautiful Chesterfield House had been put at our disposal for the time of the festivities. I have no precise remembrance of how long we remained there, nor can I quite remember which of the entertainments took place in spite of the King's illness. I made no notes at that time, so the exact sequence of events has been forgotten.

Was it at this first, or at the second coronation, that the Duke and Duchess of Westminster gave a ball at Grosvenor House? I can no longer remember for certain, but what has remained vividly in my mind was the finished perfection of that entertainment, typical of the way you were entertained in the great English houses in times of peace and plenty.

We had come from a gala representation at the Opera and were in our most festive attire. I was wearing a snow-white dress of some flowing material, a very long dress with a train, on my head a crown of diamonds. This dress was the cause of disaster, not to myself but to others. I was asked to dance, which I did in spite of the unsuitability of my gown, but soon had to give it up. Being of soft clinging material my dress had a way of wrapping itself round the legs of the other dancers thus bringing more than one to a fall; amongst these was my cousin Sophie, the Crown Princess of Greece. Thereupon I quitted the floor, horrified at being the unwilling cause of such perturbation, and retreated to the daïs arranged for the royal guests and became an on-

looker. It was one of the most brilliant and elegant gatherings it was ever given me to witness.

In this ballroom, with its beautiful pictures looking down upon us, amongst them "The Blue Boy" then not yet gone to America, the very cream of London society had flocked together, including some of the most beautiful women in the world.

Foremost amongst these was Princess Daisy Pless, tall and magnificently English in the splendour of her pink-and-white bloom. Gold-clad, with a high diamond tiara on her honey-coloured hair, gay, smiling, kindly disposed towards all men, she was indeed a glittering figure, a perfect incarnation of those days of peace, wealth and general prosperity. Our hostess, Daisy's sister, was her dark counterpart, she also a tall, brilliantly effective woman, covered with jewels. But of the two I always considered Daisy the more lovely of Cornwallis West's daughters.

One of the sights which has especially remained imprinted on my mind was the exquisite supper-hall erected for the occasion, all in blue and decorated with silver plate and blue hydrangeas, no other flowers except an occasional tuft of white lilies to set off all that blue; at a table the two sisters, Daisy and Sheila, the fair and the dark, all eyes turning towards them, they so entirely fitted into the beautiful setting.

I came in late and took a seat at one of the tables, I no longer remember with whom; I only remember that the supper was to be informal, the ladies coming in with their partners and sitting down wheresoever they pleased. This enormous blue-and-silver, flower-filled room was a feast for the eye, complete harmony such as only the most perfect English taste and tradition could achieve: not a single false note, not a mistake either in colour, proportion or detail: rich but not ostentatious, consummate refinement. Perfectly liveried footmen with that stately deportment peculiar to English servants, every one of them picked out for their fine figures and good looks, prodigious flowers, exquisite china, glass and silver, clever lighting, flattering to the complexion; in the distance soft music.

Always an artist at heart, I sat there drinking in all this beauty rendered possible only by generations of civilization and wealth. Fate had taken me to a country where all was in the making, where everything meant effort, and here I was, come back to the land of my birth,

to that beauty most kindred to my soul. There is a sort of peace in perfect attainment, especially when one has known struggle and the uncomfortable shabbiness of things not yet well established; this faultless achievement of beauty for me was *peace*. A feeling of absolute content and well-being stole over me, all else was set aside, even thought. This was perfection: no doubt it had meant much thought, effort also, but the effort was not felt, there was neither hustle, haste nor confusion; it was all as though it could not be otherwise, and therein lay that exquisite feeling of peace and content.

Thus at certain rare hours in my life has the artistic, epicurean side of my nature known absolute satisfaction, the sensation that every sense was saturated with an exquisite content and deep inner approval; and with it came always that delicious feeling of peace, the peace of achievement.

This blue and silver supper was one of the occasions; another was at Tsarskoye Selo, at a big dinner given by the Emperor Nicolas II. I cannot therefore resist calling to life again this vision which I gratefully remember.

Here the setting was different. A festive chamber dating from the time of Catherine the Great, a masterpiece of the very best rococo period: walls of looking-glass in small squares, and over this shimmering background gilt and carved festoons all converging into a golden ceiling painted with delicate floral arabesques. The gold, mellowed by centuries, had taken on the tints of beech woods in autumn, the lighting was brilliant without being glaring, it was as though the light emanated, like sunshine, from the golden walls.

In this exquisite room was a number of round tables, one mass of gorgeous golden plate and in the centre of each a small garden of yellow tulips. Gathered round these tables a company of sumptuously dressed women, officers and officials; a more glittering, glistening company could not be conceived. There at different tables sat the two Empresses and all the grand duchesses in their Russian court dress, richly tinted robes heavily embroidered with silver or gold, their crowns like haloes, their arms and necks a scintillating mass of diamonds and many coloured precious gems. Many were young and beautiful, and even all those past their first youth wore their overpowering finery with the

ease of those born to imperial splendour. There sat also my giant uncles and cousins surrounded by a numerous following of generals, A.D.C.'s and high functionaries, every one in uniform, not to mention the diplomats, their wives and an endless train of court ladies, the reds, blues, greens, violets and yellows of their gowns forming a never-ending scale of colour thrown into splendid relief against the golden background.

My eyes sought the Emperor, Nicky, dear to us all. He was not one of the giants, but the gentleness of his expression made him infinitely sympathetic; something seemed to melt in one's heart when one looked at him, at his soft hazel eyes, at his gentle lips, when one watched his quiet movements, listened to his soft, low-toned voice.

At each door stood huge niggers dressed in costumes such as are seen in old prints depicting ballets of the time of Louis XIV, with high, many-coloured ostrich plumes on their heads. At a given sign these ebony-faced apparitions would throw open the doors to a never-ending procession of red-and-gold-liveried servants who streamed into the room bearing enormous dishes of silver and gold, laden with peacocks, swans and pheasants served up with their gorgeous plumes; dishes so huge and heavy that one marvelled how a single man could carry such a weight. Fish, meat, venison, vegetables, ices, creams, tropical fruit; wines, ruby red, golden, amber, topaz; and all that was set before you was not only exquisitely served but deliciously tasty.

So as to give a last touch of luxurious perfection to this imperial banquet, ravishing music was played by the Tsar's private orchestra; this, no ordinary military band, but each man a picked musician playing Tschaikovski, Borodin, Rimsky-Korsakov, Rachmaninov, Stravinski, also Beethoven, Mozart, Schumann, Wagner, Strauss, Debussy, etc. Some declared that this was waste, that on such occasions no one listened to excellent music. But everything being so perfect I could but rejoice that this culminating touch was given to this feast, unforgettable because so consummate.

This was one of those occasions where I sat almost mute, overcome by perfect content, every sense satisfied, the eye, the ear, the tongue; no flaw anywhere, and it all looked as though it could not be otherwise, no apparent effort; it unfolded before one's gaze, a pageant of royalty at its supremest. This too was achievement; it had in it the same satis-

faction as when witnessing an absolutely flawless opera or theatrical representation, or listening in a cathedral to a grand organ, or seeing exquisite dancing, perfectly lighted, rhythm, sound, colour, setting. All that is absolutely perfect gives that feeling of peace. This is not a question of ethics, but of absolute physical content, a moment when all questioning is lulled, one no longer debates in one's mind why this should be, if it is right or wrong, sinful luxury, extravagant waste; nothing exists but content. May those who have never experienced this misunderstand me if they choose.

This stupendous Imperial world is at an end; I am not going either to criticize or defend that which was. I merely declare that it was beautiful, a feast for the eyes.

Our cynical times admit no more beauty, anyhow not in this form; it now belongs to the past as completely as the Crusades or the *Minnesänger*. The central figures around which all this glory circled are no more; their death was terrible, not to be thought of if one wants to sleep in peace. But they died still believing that they too were loved.

Other principles rule the world to-day: up to the present I have not perceived that they have made it any happier or more prosperous, but what I do perceive is that beauty is being murdered more and more every day. Is there "achievement" in this? Perhaps; but does it bring contentment? Permitting myself for once a cynicism, I would like to say, No, not even the very material contentment of that horde of red-and-gold-clad footmen who consumed or carried back to their families the copious remains of their imperial master's feast.

Mais tout passe. . . .

The difference between English and Russian opulence was an interesting study. In Russia all was gorgeous beyond description, but there was always something Eastern about the luxury even in those houses where Western customs and manners had been introduced. One felt there was prodigality in all things, an uncalculating largeness, a certain underlying negligence, not to say waste. There was something generously haphazard about it, also a certain primitiveness. It was like a rapid growth, whilst everything in England seemed to be based upon solid habit become adamant by tradition and upheld by unshakable convictions.

Nothing, for instance, is more irreproachably perfect in every detail than the King of England's court and household, a sort of staid luxury without ostentation, a placid, aristocratic ease and opulence which has nothing showy about it. Everything is run on silent wheels that have been perfectly greased; everything fits in, there are no spaces between, no lapses, no false note. From the polite, handsome and superlatively groomed gentleman-in-waiting who receives you in the hall, to the magnificently solemn and yet welcoming footman who walks before you down the corridor, everything pleases the eye, satisfies one's fastidiousness. When I call up before my mind the royal English abodes I always have the vision of softly carpeted, picture-hung corridors, with a silent-footed servant walking ahead of you, discreetly impersonal and yet belonging to the whole; I have the feeling of mounting shallow-stepped stairs leading towards rooms as perfectly "groomed" as were the horses of the royal carriage which brought you up to the front door, as perfectly groomed also as the tall sentry presenting arms before the gates. His uniform was better cut than any uniform in any other country, he was slimmer, straighter, cleaner, more perfectly turned out. Everything the eye perceives seems to have just been taken out of a band-box, fresh from the laundry, beautifully ironed, uncrumpled, unsoiled.

Those who live in England are so accustomed to this well-established tidiness and sober sumptuousness that it seems natural, as though it could not be otherwise, but those who, having wandered far from the fold to more Eastern lands, when returning to their old environment marvel at the order achieved by generations of tidiness which has finally become a national quality.

Not only the court but all the great houses of England have this same stamp upon them of discreet but fundamental luxury, an effortless, superlatively organized and undiscussed perfection which astonishes no one except the traveller who has come from a "far land."

I have not been to England for several years; I know the world is changing fast, but I hope that this perfection is not passing away with so much else.

When returning after many years' absence to these haunts of my childhood and earliest youth, I am filled with a feeling of such profound and tremendous inner satisfaction that it is as though something

which had been knotted up inside me and which had always been aching, had suddenly been untied and I was sinking back luxuriously into what was mine and still fundamentally belongs to that real "me" which comes to life again only when touching my own soil. And in that satisfaction which was both joy and pain there lay also the eternal and unappeased nostalgia for that from which I had been torn.

The long-drawn-out effort to overcome difficulties, to live as harmoniously and bravely as possible where Fate had placed me, had lulled this nostalgia. It had to be throttled, done away with, so as to find the daily courage to succeed, so as to become constructive, banishing regret as a weakness never to be indulged in. There must be no looking back, only a straining forwards, relentlessly, without end.

But the sensation of coming home, to what is no more "home," is both wonderful and unbearable; it seems to tear apart your very heart-strings, to fill you to the very brim with all the tears you never dared weep, with all the world-wide *Sehnsucht* you never dared express.

I remember once how this nostalgia overwhelmed me like a great wave whilst walking with Queen Alexandra over the lawns of Sandringham. The sward underfoot was soft, dense emerald-green; against a background of firs grew great clumps of azaleas and rhododendrons. I was advancing in a sort of dream; this was England, *my* country, this had all been mine once. Now it was mine no more, I was almost a stranger and yet not a stranger, for my roots had really remained here in this English soil. An immense desire came over me to fall down on the ground and kiss this green, green grass, to roll on it, to feel it, possess it, make it mine once more. It was excruciating pain, *Sehnsucht*—there is no other word which properly expresses it—it was the longing of the outcast towards that which he had denied, from which he himself had shut himself out.

My aunt looked at me and took my hand. "You love it?" was all she said. "Yes, I love it, and it hurts to love quite so hard. . . ." *Sehnsucht!*

Sehnsucht! I remember a spring spent at Esher in a wee cottage rented by my sister, the Infanta Beatrice, who was bringing up her boys in England. This was at a much later date, after the War, but it fits into the chapter *Sehnsucht*, so I mention it here. It was the first

spring I had spent in England since I was a child. I had about three weeks' holiday at my disposal and lived every hour of it with an intensity difficult to describe. I shall never belong to the indifferent, even if I get very old I feel that my emotions will be strong; this also is a characteristic, I believe, of the era we have put behind us, but I am as I am.

My sister had given me a small room overlooking the garden, a room with a sloping roof, a real English cottage room; I dearly loved this room and the big bowls of flowers I filled daily kept it exquisitely fragrant.

When I opened my window to the keen spring air, listening to the birds or even to the rain, I felt like a convalescent breathing in health and new life. I was aware that this could not last, the days would drop too quickly into Eternity, but I meant to grasp every second, not a minute was to be wasted.

Beyond the gardens lay the woods full of blue-bells, an azure carpet such as England alone can offer; blue-bells and primroses, and in every tree birds building their nests, filling the air with their calls, their songs. I had known all this as a child forty years ago; I had never possessed it since those far-off days, and yet it was suddenly as though nothing that had happened between had ever counted, nothing ever . . . except this English spring.

We can become patriots elsewhere, we can toil, love, adopt, do our share there where it has pleased God to place us; but when born to a soil, more especially to English soil, nothing can ever unbind that link, and the roots which have thirsted elsewhere immediately go deep down and find there the nourishment most kindred to our being.

Every line, every colour, every sound, every smell was just what I had always unconsciously been yearning for, the instantaneous, complete, inner satisfaction was ample proof of this. It was coming home to what I had always missed.

Then there was the English breakfast, the familiar dishes, the jam, the Devonshire cream, the scones, the cakes, the fat double loaf of heavy white bread. And the honeysuckle-encircled window opened straight out on to the lawn, a real English lawn, intensely green, smooth, dense, soft underfoot; on to large tufts of light yellow violas in the enclosed garden, the herbaceous border breaking into bloom, and

all those birds calling to me from the blue-carpeted woods. Even the English dampness of which so many complain felt strongly fraternal, refreshing, to one who lives in a land of dust.

It was as though I must hurry to grasp it all, absorb it into my very veins; the days would pass and then it would slip from me again irrevocably, for ever. These places would know me no more, it was only I who knew them; now officially I belonged elsewhere.

PART FOUR

1906-1914

CHAPTER XXIII

TO GERMANY AND RUSSIA

ONCE during our yearly autumn vacation (it was, if I remember rightly, in 1906) I paid a visit to Prince and Princess Pless at Fürstenstein, a magnificent palatial dwelling they owned in Silesia.

Here Daisy had introduced the English fashion of house-parties. Their huge castle was always full, they entertained lavishly with a grand indifference to cost, almost fantastic to look back upon from these days of dearth.

I cannot well remember how I came to accept this invitation, which was quite outside my usual round, belonging most certainly to those things Uncle Carol tabooed. I suppose I simply went there without asking permission, which would probably have been refused. I went together with my sister Hohenlohe, and our Cousin Sophie, already Crown Princess of Greece.

Daisy had the vaguest idea about time; she kept impossible hours and was always the last to appear for meals, to the despair of her formal and correct German husband, who tried to invent plausible excuses for her unpunctuality.

Everybody could do as they would at Fürstenstein, everything was at the disposal of the guests, but our lovely hostess had every intention of having a good time herself, so the party split up into groups according to their different tastes. The grounds in themselves were magnificent and the castle so huge that it could hardly be explored.

Prince Pless ran a huge stable of fine horses and Daisy and I rode out together several times. The first day I was given a fine chestnut who began by rearing straight up on end. The way I managed to handle my mount on this occasion established me in the eyes of all as a good rider. Daisy was herself an excellent horsewoman and her husband also rode well. Followed by several Englishmen, including Sir Ian Hamilton, we rode out far to a field in search of Kaiser Wilhelm's splendid

troops concentrated that autumn in the neighbourhood of Breslau for the annual *Kaisermanöver*.

After the sumptuous evening meal there was generally dancing, and in between the dances we would saunter about the beautiful terraces overlooking a deep wooded valley, for Fürstenstein lies superbly situated on a hill.

One evening I specially remember, my vanity having reaped a great success. I was clad in a pale pink, silver-bordered gown cut according to Greek lines and on my fair hair I wore a classically plain round wreath of roses, a form of head-dress which suited my type of face. I was conscious, as one occasionally is, of looking my best, and this in itself is stimulating. There was amongst the guests an American who was an excellent dancer, and we were asked to give a demonstration of the "valse-boston," then the great fashion.

My partner and I had the floor to ourselves and we danced as one can only dance when one's pace is in perfect accord. I was filled with that special exhilaration which comes from the consciousness of doing a thing well and that an appreciative audience is looking on. I had the feeling of swimming or flying, and my silver-bordered dress followed our movements in graceful curves. I knew that all eyes were upon me and I confess having enjoyed to the full this small triumph so agreeably flattering to my self-esteem. I have had my share of success in life, but certain occasions stand out more clearly than others. Being rarely *dans le monde où l'on s'amuse* I was not in the least *blasée*, all good things came to me with a freshness not to be conceived by those who live in a round of pleasure all the year through.

The grand manœuvres were to end with a huge parade at Breslau, and Daisy had specially begged me and my sister to remain so that we could drive together to witness this fine display of troops. Owing to the Kaiser's presence the town was all agog with pleasurable excitement.

The Pless carriages were renowned for their magnificence, which gave them a regal air. Daisy had decided that we should drive in great state, have in fact our own private little procession and persuaded me to don my most becoming attire. I remember my long, plum-coloured velvet cloak and the wee golden toque with a white paradise plume sweeping down over one ear. Daisy had a way of enveloping herself

in tulle which gave her a diaphanous appearance, adding greatly to the effect she made wherever she showed herself. Delighted with our "get-up," I can still hear Daisy declaring we were going to outshine the Emperor in all his glory.

Our turn-out was certainly showy enough to satisfy any public; high carriages slung on soft springs, rubber-tyred wheels, four magnificent horses, we two fair young women all smiles in our festive attire and opposite us Prince Pless in brilliant uniform.

Much has been related about Kaiser Wilhelm's parades. They certainly were a magnificent show, unique of their kind, an imposing display of power and stupendous organization. The different regiments used to pass like one man and the much ridiculed goose-step was an added proof of superlative training. When the men pointed their toes, every one of them exactly at the same height, it was a unique sight. The regiments advanced one behind the other like moving walls, not an inch out of place, and every manœuvre was carried out with miraculous, unbelievable precision. The uniforms, except those of the cavalry regiments, were not showy, but they were perfectly cut and certainly "uniform" beyond the dream of imagination.

The most thrilling moment was when the Kaiser in all his glory appeared on the scene on a white, occasionally even on a piebald horse, a long train of brilliant uniforms in his wake.

Well to the fore, bolt upright, the ends of his aggressive moustache pointing to the skies, field-marshal's staff in hand, he was every inch the picture of a dominator, sure of his power, revelling in his dignity, so that instinctively you understood, even sympathized with the proud triumph which swept through him when he surveyed his splendid troops.

Looking back to-day from his cramped place of exile, I think he must still say to himself: "Indeed my troops were a goodly sight"; and they were, no one will be able to deny this fact, and I for one am pleased that I witnessed that Breslau parade.

The Empress generally accompanied him, riding a little to the rear of the Lord and Master. Mounted on a tall black horse she wore a white uniform and a white tricorn hat.

Some used to scoff and try to turn her into ridicule, but I always admired the patient courage with which this devoted woman carried out

her husband's every order; there was a brave abnegation about it which is not given to every woman. I do not think she always enjoyed all the racket and fatigue, but the characteristic smile never faded from her lips.

That same evening in Breslau all the regimental bands had gathered together before the window of the large hotel where the Emperor and his followers were banqueting, for a royal tattoo.

So that their guests should also enjoy this unique sight, our hosts had taken a room in the upper story of the same hotel. I remember leaning out of the window wrapped in a wide mantle of red cloth, colour of my Roşiori regiment. Daisy's fair head was close to mine, my sister was on my other side, we were very gay and enjoyed ourselves much more than the exalted party on the terrace below.

Many of these, including the Crown Prince and some of his brothers, Prince Max Fürstenberg and others, came up to greet us, but Cousin William, for some inexplicable reason, found it good to ignore us. I but rarely came from far Roumania and it would have been natural enough to send us a sign of recognition, but this he did not do, which was considered ungracious. But I laughed; in those days everything amused me, it would have needed more than the Kaiser's indifference to damp my spirits. I did hear those around me murmur, but I would not join in with their criticisms, life was too short and too full to take offence at the small negligences of our very royal cousin!

There are not many other interesting visits abroad to describe, as these were few and far between. Once we were allowed to go to Russia in 1908 for the marriage of my cousin Marie, only daughter of Uncle Paul, and once in 1910 to Berlin for the Emperor's birthday.

In Petersburg we lived in the palace of Uncle Vladimir and Aunt Miechen, an imperial couple who played a preponderant part in the Russian capital.

The Emperor Nicolas II and his wife had almost entirely abandoned the Winter Palace, and they lived exclusively at Tsarskoye, shut away from the rest of the world. A happy family life no doubt, but their exclusiveness was little conducive towards that fine, loyal unity which had always been traditional in the Russian Imperial Family during the two former reigns and which had constituted its great power. Up to

the present the family had been an undivided block with the Emperor as pivot; on all occasions it came together like one man to stand round its sovereign, thus strongly upholding his authority. Too self-centred, too exclusively interested in their own children, Nicky and Alix neglected their imperial relations, thereby undermining their trust and loyalty, also their love.

It is a great mistake for a sovereign to allow the family feeling to fall to pieces, he is much stronger with his family than without; an amiable, affectionate attitude towards the older as well as the younger generation holds them together and uproots any imagined or real reasons for complaint or discontent. The moment he allows his family through neglect or injustice on his side, to split up into parties or clans, the seeds of discord and sedition have been sown, and this is fatal in the hour of danger when he may find himself alone, abandoned, as he abandoned those formerly only too ready to see in him the supreme head.

Uncle Vladimir was the most erudite of Mamma's brothers. He was a real scholar; history being his special hobby, there was not a name, date or event he did not know by heart, and he was most interesting to talk to: he was also heart and soul a soldier.

Genial, humorous, with a ringing voice, he liked to entertain the many guests with whom his very worldly wife filled his house. Like all my Russian uncles he could be uncomfortably outspoken and his voice being unusually sonorous and carrying, his remarks could occasionally be disconcerting, but this was the only thing about him in the least intimidating. Uncle Vladimir was the most kindly gentleman in every way.

Aunt Miechen, an exceptionally charming and intelligent lady, was also ambitious and it was not without a certain satisfaction that by force of circumstance she became the social centre of Petersburg. It must be admitted that she was an incomparably amiable hostess and knew to perfection how to receive all manner of men.

All through life she had been cherished, adulated, spoiled. She could spend what she would, every luxury, every comfort, every honour, every advantage were hers and she was one of the best-dressed women of her time: her clothes were superlatively smart and she had the great art of knowing exactly what to wear for each occasion; she never made

a mistake. An atmosphere of unlimited prosperity emanated from her, she was the undisputed centre of her world, her very aspect invited attention; one of life's most spoilt children, she seemed to expect everyone who approached her to continue the spoiling, which they generally did, and yet it was she who appeared to be dispensing favours. There was great art in this.

Her house was certainly a most pleasant one for a short stay, as her hospitality was unlimited, and all the most important and interesting people came together in her salon. Here she reigned supreme; ministers, generals, foreign ambassadors, intellectuals even, bowed before her charm if not before her wit, for in reality she was less intelligent than was generally believed, but she had *la manière* and this counted more than anything else. We got on wonderfully together and she was exceedingly kind to my husband; she talked German with him and understood, with her perfect tact, how to help him overcome his timidity so that he felt comfortably at home in her company.

A series of festivities followed the wedding—balls, receptions, parties, lunches and dinners; we met many people and had a gay time, but unfortunately I was not up to the mark as I was expecting my fifth child and was just in the months when one feels most unwell.

Russians have a way of making you feel extraordinarily welcome; there was something fiery and impulsive, especially about the men, old or young, which made everything worth while. Wherever we went I had the pleasant sensation of being a favourite, almost as though I had been impatiently awaited and had at last come to those who had always considered me one of their own, a lamb gone astray and come back to the fold. It is difficult to resist this sort of kindness, it invites response; in those days in Russia individuality played a great part: you were not supposed to be cut down to one particular pattern, there was a place for everyone and women were not set aside. I felt very happy and appreciated in Petersburg.

The contrast between the chief courts of Europe in pre-war days was an interesting study: London, Vienna, St. Petersburg, Berlin.

London, sober, dignified, supremely aristocratic in the highest sense of the word. Of course each sovereign gave a special tone to his time; Queen Victoria, King Edward, King George—but through all three

reigns ran a magnificent, sober dignity, even in King Edward's time when the English court was the least exclusive.

Vienna, all etiquette and ancient tradition, stiff, unbending, no place for the low-born, and running through it all the spirit of Catholicism, tyrannical, narrow, inflexible. But Vienna is itself a gay, sympathetic, brilliant centre.

St. Petersburg, gorgeous, lavishly welcoming, generous and hugely wasteful, limitless hospitality, but with an under-current of mystery not unmixed with anxiety. Here was wealth unlimited, power in the most absolute form but with something of apprehension, something a little dark lying beneath the dazzling exterior.

And finally Berlin, so to say the *nouveau riche*, the upstart, amongst the Great Powers and their courts. Great military display, magnificent order and discipline, a feeling of young strength but a little too new, too big, too loud. I am of course speaking of William II's reign. William I had been a very quiet and sober gentleman, and the Emperor Frederick's reign was but a light that went out.

William II was high-spirited, many-sided, caring for all things at once. Having come to the throne when very young he was naturally fascinated by the glittering, showy side of royalty. He was still boy enough to enjoy the display, the uniforms, the decorations, the music, the noisy and gaudy rituals. He saw himself the central figure of a tremendous and armed show, and having histrionic ability and plenty of self-assurance it was not unnatural that he should have enjoyed the part he was called upon to play. He was young, impulsive, had the whole of life before him; besides, is not each man born with his own particular nature? Some are timid, retiring, horrified at the thought of being in the limelight. Others, on the contrary, like to be the central figure; a natural exuberance emanates from them, they like being first, like being acclaimed, are not afraid of responsibilities; they want to be listened to, to talk loudest and, sure of their own opinion, sure of their rights, they are impatient against contradiction and particularly resent every warning.

Such was William. Belonging myself to the rash and spontaneous, to the unafraid, there are certain things I understand in my cousin. He believed in his right to rule, decide, dominate, he believed also in the approval of his people. He believed himself to be, perhaps he was, the

ruler they desired. He felt upheld, appreciated, the young monarch of a young and vigorous people; power was sweet and success went like wine to his head.

If he had been successful up to the very end his name would have remained that of a great emperor. He was finally beaten and the beaten are put aside, done away with, and it is only their faults that are remembered, not their virtues.

The Kaiser had certainly something about him which made him unsympathetic to his family. He was never a favourite, he was not very careful about other people's feelings, he was too sure of himself, too overbearing. There was really no modesty about him, not even at moments when it would have been elegant to be less assertive; this often did him harm and there were few of us who did not resent the rough, offhand manner with which he liked to treat us, as though we were not really worthy of his attention. But he *was* a personality, often an aggressive one, I admit, but not to be overlooked.

My husband had attended more than one Kaiser's *Geburtstag*, but this was the first time we went together. I had never in fact been back to William's house since 1892, the year of our engagement, and this was in 1910, if I rightly remember, and I was already mother of five children.

Nando was glad of every opportunity for going to Berlin or Potsdam. The atmosphere had remained congenial to him and here he met many old friends and military comrades; besides, one of his brothers was serving in Potsdam in the 1st Guard regiment and the other as a lancer in Berlin.

The exact opposite to the Kaiser, as timid as the other was assertive, as modest as William was flashy, my husband had nevertheless retained a loyal feeling towards his former military chief and *chef de famille*; he was never one of his disparagers and was always ready to take up the cudgels in his defence, although William paid him but very scant attention.

We were, of course, officially received and I was witness of the perfect order reigning supreme at the Prussian court. Everything was beautifully done and staged with a great feeling for solemn display.

Of the fine apartment put at our disposal in the *Schloss* I particularly

remember my bedroom, an exquisite blue and gold rococo chamber which had once belonged to Frederick the Great. Over the bed hung his portrait of the time. I was also delighted with the magnificent amaryllis grouped in gorgeous red masses in my salon.

Augusta Victoria ushered me into this room with her somewhat formal affability. There was nothing really hearty about her, she could never put off that attitude of stereotyped graciousness which too much resembled condescension to be quite pleasant. I have, however, retained one more familiar remembrance of this somewhat over-monumental, over-formal lady which I like to think back upon. "Dona" was at her best amongst her sons, then a fine set of promising young men; in their company she lost some of her stiffness and of that shallow amiability which prevented any warmer intercourse. It was after a family lunch and my young cousins were crowding round me, pleased to have amongst them a relation they so seldom saw. I was dressed in a white cloth Redfern gown, very smart and Parisian, and had had the fancy of wearing orange shoes and stockings to add to the *chic* of my attire. The cousins were so delighted with this quaint finishing touch that they insisted on their mother coming to look at it, and I remember having to put my toes on a sofa and pull up a few inches of my long sweeping skirt to show off my orange finery. The Empress was somewhat taken aback by this unconventional foot-gear, but carried away by the general gaiety she for a moment forgot to be condescending, and we all laughed heartily; that was the only time I remember seeing her really natural, so to say off her guard and not acting.

My young cousins were extremely amiable and made me, the rare guest, feel pleasantly welcome. I became friends with them all and they vied with each other in trying to give me pleasure.

A very smart *soirée* was offered us by the Crown Prince, who had in the previous year been on a visit to Bucarest, where his perfect manners and extreme amiability had left an excellent impression. Cecile, his wife, was one of the most charming princesses of her day. Tall, willowy, with wide-open eyes set rather far apart, she had a large but unattractive mouth. Her smile was captivating, her manner easy without any constraint: she received her many guests with perfect grace, cleverly seconded by William, who was fond of receiving smart and pretty ladies and who grouped them gladly round his table.

William, being a keen rider, took great care of his figure, which was slim, tall, upright; never might a pound be added to his weight. His uniforms were cut to the last degree of perfection. His boots were as shiny as mirrors and his sword was unusually high!

We supped at small tables covered with beautiful flowers, and several younger Roumanian ladies had for this festive occasion followed me to Berlin, William having made ravages amongst "the beauties of Bucarest." Susceptible to feminine charm, there were especially a pair of very large, velvety eyes which were supposed not to have left him quite indifferent. These ladies had been invited to the royal board. I was much amused at the many little by-plays and thoroughly enjoyed my evening. Daisy Pless was also amongst the guests, gorgeous as ever in her clouds of tulle; she always attracted all eyes, the pink and white radiance of her English beauty could never be overlooked.

We also had a ball at the house of Eitel Friedrich, the Emperor's second son, and a lunch with August Wilhelm, whose only child was my godson. Eitel Friedrich's wife was very intelligent; I liked her, although in general she was much less popular than the Crown Princess, being somewhat short of speech and not really fond of society. He was the most friendly of princes, over-stout but kind and jovial, and we had a certain instinctive sympathy for each other.

The ceremonies for the Emperor's birthday were brilliant and beautifully organized, and the military splendour with which the Kaiser surrounded his every movement was always well staged and impressive.

I remember sitting beside him during a gala representation. I was dressed in a gown of silver sequins and William, turning to me in his brusque rather challenging way, asked me if I imagined I was Lohengrin or the Lorelei. I was always perfectly able to hold my own with him, but must admit that he roused in me a certain pugnacity which inclined me to answer him in his own way. The male attitude was predominant in this self-assertive sovereign: he could be amiable when he wanted, but made show, towards ladies in general and the women of his family in particular, of a certain abrupt contempt which was partly put on but which made me feel belligerent; all conversation with him was like crossing swords.

For one of the State dinners I was paired off with the old Duke of Saxe-Weimar, an ancient gentleman celebrated for his conventional

and old-fashioned amiability, ever ready to pay a compliment or to pronounce some ceremonious platitude. He had a disconcerting way of smacking his lips and leaving his mouth open as though snapping in air. Turning towards me he declared that he could at once read upon my charming countenance that I never read novels. My love of truth made me protest, which evidently caused me to go down in his estimation: I suppose he considered novel reading a sign of frivolity.

This stately old aristocrat was tall and had managed, in spite of his advanced age, to retain an elegance of line which was a great satisfaction to him. His face, however, was almost mummified beneath his dry, much-creased skin. To hide his sunken temples he brushed his hair neatly forward in a way which reminded one of old Empire portraits, and the ends of his moustache were waxed to pin-points. He held himself as upright as age would permit, but his once martial tread had become stilted with the ever-growing stiffness of his weary old joints. Tightly ensconced in his impeccable uniform he had somewhat the air of a mechanical toy, his wooden gait adding to this effect, also the somewhat vacant stare of his washed-out blue eyes.

No end of quaint anecdotes were related about this amiable and over-ceremonious prince, who had the beautiful, somewhat conventional manners of earlier generations. Slave to the round of his royal duties, he was for ever visiting institutions, opening schools, laying foundation-stones, inaugurating State buildings and so forth. One day, inspecting a prison, he had become somewhat fatigued, but continued bravely to manifest all the interest expected of such a conscientiously benign prince, asking endless questions of the director who was showing him round, and from time to time talking to the prisoners themselves.

Stopping before one of those whose face had struck him, he inquired as to what had been his crime and was told that the man had murdered his mother. With unrelaxed amiability the old Grand Duke exclaimed: "Oh! Madame his mother, very interesting," and, turning to the director: "What sentence has the good man been given?" "Life-long penal servitude." "Oh! indeed; well, in remembrance of my royal visit I desire that he be pardoned the last ten years of his punishment," and grandly the old gentleman passed on.

On another occasion, being driven through a street of newly erected

houses of which the burghers were very proud, he graciously admired the town's laudable efforts and amiably inquired: "Have all these houses been built here?"

There is many another little tale which could be told about this dear old gentleman, who was even then a relic of the past, but this is not his story, and I must pass on.

CHAPTER XXIV

ROYALTIES VISIT ROUMANIA

KING CAROL preferred receiving his guests at Sinaia, the great love of his life. He had no interest in the Bucarest palace, an old State building lacking in beauty, charm and comfort. He would never spend a penny upon improving or smartening it up; it remained therefore a somewhat primitive building with a few good rooms and one fine grand staircase, but no adequate apartments in which to put up visitors.

Der Onkel was too busy a man to care much about entertaining guests; his life was so drawn up to schedule that any break in the usual round was an upheaval; even visits from his family disturbed him if they were announced or proposed during the months when he was in town.

He was conscious that his old palace offered little comfort, nor were his days, whilst parliament was sitting, so arranged as to leave time for entertaining guests, members of the family or otherwise. He was afraid they would be bored, whilst they certainly would disturb him. The whole, somewhat heavy machinery of the Bucarest court life was run to the complete exclusion of "gaiety" or entertainment of any sort. The King did, however, give a few court balls during the winter season, but these were included amongst the duties he imposed upon himself and the royal family and were in no wise to be looked upon as "pleasure," a word King Carol had effaced from his dictionary. That I finally enjoyed his court balls, which for me meant occasions for airing my fine clothes and meeting my friends and admirers, was but the exception which proved the rule.

I shall, however, never forget the cruel ordeal of my first Bucarest court ball. I was just seventeen and quite a stranger in an unknown world, the prey of a thousand eyes, and I was feeling ill. Of course to my simple conception of things a ball meant dancing; this seemed to surprise Uncle, but after all why should not the child dance if her partners were carefully chosen according to a princess's dignity? So

after *reifliches Ueberlegen*, an elderly cavalry colonel, gay in his day perhaps, but certainly not in mine, was brought up to me and away we sailed round the large room, all the other dancers politely making way for us. It was a terrible ordeal; the colonel did his best, but I felt miserably humiliated because of what I considered the weight of his years and returned to the royal circle almost in tears.

It was only several years later that I began enjoying these balls. I had gained a certain footing of my own, faces were becoming familiar to me, I no more felt such a shivering little outsider and I was getting accustomed to being devoured by so many eyes. Two seasons running we were actually encouraged to dance costumed quadrilles such as the pavane, and a minuet and also Japanese and peasant dances. Both my husband and I danced in these; they were very pretty and have remained a brilliant memory in the annals of Bucarest's sedate court entertainments.

I loved dancing in my day and had the habit of changing my gown towards the end of the evening when the old King and Queen retired and the room was cleared for the cotillion. For our state entry and *cercle* I would appear in a long, stately gown, as grand and dignified as possible and always carefully chosen so as to make the right effect, but when the real dancing began, I would run off and change, reappearing in a dress better suited for vigorous exercise, for indeed in those days of the valse and cotillion dancing was quite an exertion.

I used to enjoy these cotillions, so did my husband; the room was large, the floor excellent, the dancers mostly good with but a few uncomfortable exceptions whom we used to call the "dangers" because they tore your dress and trod on your toes, and it was still of paramount importance to pair off with a pleasant partner. I always knew exactly with whom I wanted to dance, but found it diplomatic to valse through a series of bores first, so as to gain the right of dancing with the favourite. No one was, I suppose, taken in by these naïve subterfuges for I was not a very good actress and deluded, I suppose, no one but myself.

But to come back to the subject of visits.

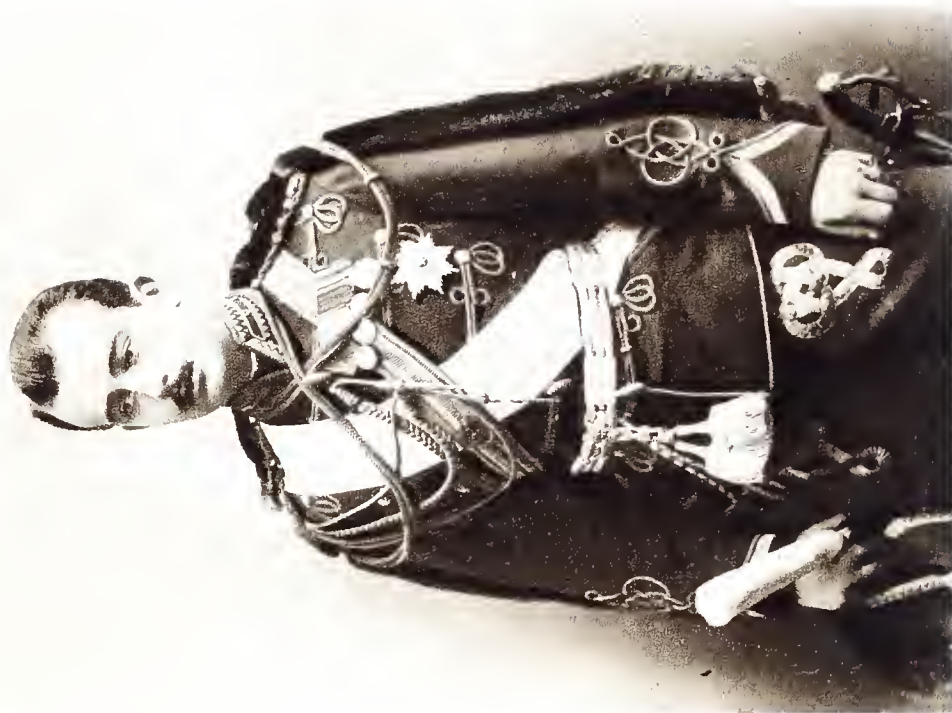
There were, of course, occasions when Uncle could not avoid receiving at Bucarest, especially when a sovereign came to see him, or a



THE DRESS I WORE FOR THE MINUET (WITH CAROL)



IN ONE OF MY SINAIA ROOMS



COUSIN BORIS

crown prince, when it was considered *de rigueur* that he should first pass through the capital where the citizens were eager to show their appreciation by preparing a big reception.

By far the most important guest we ever received was the Emperor of Austria, dear old Franz Joseph. (The Tsar's visit was much later, in 1914.) I was very young in those days and still regarded such events as pleasurable excitements.

King Carol had a feeling of affectionate respect for the old Emperor who was a true friend to Roumania's King, even when his politics weighed somewhat heavily upon the striving little country which showed rather uncomfortable signs of living, thriving and . . . spreading.

The Emperor Franz Joseph came on the 16th of September, 1896, and his advent in our midst was looked upon as an occasion for great rejoicing and demonstrations of sympathy, and my husband and I were also called upon to do our share as honourably as possible.

At this same date my father also expressed a wish to come and see me for the first time and my joy was great, but Uncle was not quite sure if it suited him to have any other royal guest at the same time as the Emperor and persuaded me to write as tactfully as possible to my parent saying that, as we were expecting this very official visit, would not Papa perhaps prefer coming a little later. But luckily Papa did not take the hint and answered that on the contrary he would be only too delighted to meet the dear old Emperor again, whom he had not seen for many a year; so Uncle had to include the Duke of Coburg in his festive programme.

Papa, of course, lived in our house and I remember having sent him the queer petition to "bring his cook with him"! Papa declared that he had often been asked to bring a friend, a gun or a fishing-rod, but this was the first time he had ever been invited with his cook.

The reason for this unconventional demand was that our very young household was in continual difficulties with its cooks. They never seemed to remain the year round and I was quite at a loss, my house being a very big one and rather unwieldy to manage with the not very efficient aid I received from those in authority. General Robescu, the head of our household, otherwise an amiable gentleman, was quite unequal to settling kitchen difficulties.

It had become proverbial in the family that we could never keep a cook, and Mamma continually teased me much on this subject; we even once had a bet together that if I managed to keep my cook beyond the New Year she would give me a certain coveted Italian water-colour in her possession. I won my picture but I cannot swear that the cook much outstayed the 1st of January.

Cooks of every kind and every nationality kept passing through our kitchen during the first years; a Russian who wanted to enrich himself too quickly, a German who was deplorably inadequate, a Frenchman who thought himself a poet and hid little musical boxes in his puddings and disliked General Robescu with Latin unrestraint, a Pole who suffered from chilblains, and a Czech who could not get on with his wife, etc., etc.

Other young households have, I believe, known the same sort of trouble, and we were not an exception, but I felt very humiliated at having to ask my father for the loan of his cook; but let me hastily add that the cook actually in my service now is soon going to celebrate his thirty years' jubilee, which proves that the culinary difficulties did not last for ever. But as one of the features of Uncle's programme for the Austrian Emperor's entertainment was an official lunch we were to give at Cotroceni, it was of paramount importance to have a good cook, and the Coburg cook was quite a celebrity. I am glad to say that our lunch was a great success and Papa rubbed his hands in silent glee.

It was the first and only time Papa ever visited me in Roumania, and I was pathetically eager that he should feel at home in our house. In those days I was not a very competent housewife; I found local peculiarities hard to cope with, and a deplorable inability to scold my servants was not particularly conducive to order. In Roumania nothing is naturally tidy, there is little routine, and accustomed to Occidental precision I did not realize what a continual effort it would mean to hold my own when dealing with quite unexpected and perplexing Eastern negligences.

With the years Papa had become very silent; sometimes, in fact, he could be quite glum, and he liked best to be left alone to his own devices and desires. He had his own habits and these we had been taught rigorously to respect. No one could be more charming than Papa on the days when he was gay and sociable, but what he liked best was to

read his newspapers by the hour, seated ensconced behind them, a glass of beer at hand from which he from time to time would slowly drink.

At that period we had only two children, Carol and Elisabetha. We were very proud of them and they shared every hour of our day. Elisabetha, then about three years old, like her grandfather, was very silent; she seldom expressed her feelings or desires, but her movements were deliberate and precise. Her face was very round, her features small, regular, absurdly classical, her gaze direct and piercing, sometimes almost fierce; she kept her very small mouth tightly shut. In fact a queer little morsel of humanity, but very attractive in her own small way.

This wee little girl took a strange fancy to her taciturn grandfather; he was "canny" to her, words were unnecessary, she felt comfortable in his company.

I can still see her dressed in a funny little Roumanian costume with an orange handkerchief tied peasant-wise round her face which made it look still chubbier, quietly stalking after him, dragging an absurd little straw chair about with her, closely observing the movements of the elderly, silent gentleman who had so suddenly come into her life, to see where he would settle down. When Papa had selected the seat and the corner which suited him and had buried himself behind his paper, Elisabetha would place her chair close beside him and remain there absolutely mute, but quite contented as though at last having found the companion who suited her best. From time to time Papa would peep at her over his paper, but he understood that nothing was expected of him, so these two queer associates exchanged never a word. But the moment Papa moved, Elisabetha, straw chair and all, moved with him, ready to take up her position beside him, no matter where he settled down. Elisabetha seldom showed strong preferences for anyone, so these small manœuvres were really amusing to watch.

All the energy and goodwill of court, town and country were called upon to receive the old Emperor worthily. It meant much to King Carol that this venerated sovereign should be honoured in every way, it suited his politics as well as his sympathies, and with King Carol these two, affection and politics, went always closely hand in hand. Young and ignorant though I was, I distinctly felt that Uncle considered this a great day for himself and his country.

Nando was very eager that I should honourably do my share; he was always a little anxious on official occasions, afraid that I should not be sufficiently impressed or that I might be too offhand. It is true that I never could learn very ceremonious or conventional manners; I was too much a child of nature and had never lived in centres of severe etiquette, so my training in these arts was scanty and insufficient, but I was naturally amiable when not too shy. I had a kindly feeling towards all men and, after all, youth and a pretty face are natural allies. Aunt Elisabeth was, on the contrary, past master in the art of receiving. Her social talents were exceptional and her conversation charming, interesting, though occasionally a little high-flown and over-poetical for very *terre à terre* people. But I learnt much from her, though in those days her excessive amiability made me feel sometimes a little uncomfortable. I would not always "play up," for the young are always afraid of being absurd and I came of a family little accustomed to show or express their feelings.

I cannot remember all the details of that Imperial visit; it is so long ago and there is no one left to talk it over with, they are all gone! But I remember the big parade where I proudly rode beside Uncle and the Emperor, and Papa was also with us in a blue German hussar uniform.

Later, King Carol had a picture painted by Adukiowitzch of this celebrated review where he led his troops past the old Emperor. Auntie looked on from a carriage harnessed *à la Daumont*, accompanied by her ladies-in-waiting. The Emperor was very pleased with my riding and soon after, as a souvenir of this memorable day, sent me a thoroughbred horse from one of his studs, a lovely mare called Preciosa of which I was intensely proud and which Ducky rode a great deal when she came to me.

After the Bucarest festivities were over, we all moved to Sinaia where Uncle much enjoyed showing his old friend the castle he had built with such love and care, and of which he was so proud. Here in Castel Peleş there was ample room for guests and an apartment, specially arranged for the old Emperor, goes still to-day by the name of "*Kaiserszimmer*."

Here, so-called rural entertainments had been organized in the beautiful mountain setting, especially a solemn walk in procession up to the "Stăna," a lovely spot on the mountain-side where Uncle's cows

were put out to pasture in summer, and where a more or less sylvan lunch was given when everybody was expected to be simple, jolly and harmless. But an official picnic with grand guests is never particularly mirthful: it has always something just a little absurd in its pretence at artlessness. Etiquette and all constraint are supposed to be put aside, but this succeeds very rarely; it is difficult to extirpate all stiffness from kings, diplomats and court functionaries whose very *raison d'être* is ceremony. There is no real ring of sincerity about the whole proceeding, nor were the two chief actors, King Carol and his worthy guest, cast for a light part.

Auntie did her best to animate the outdoor meal. She had the faculty of seeing things as she desired, but her poetic exuberance was not always to Uncle's taste.

I remember well how she was dressed that day, in a queer red garment very much looped up. In former days she liked to undertake sudden excursions into forest and mountain, followed by a train of young girls and people of all sorts, who, under the charm of her poetical language, saw the world, anyhow whilst she was talking, as she desired they should.

Now she seldom left the house, but I could not help admiring how light of foot she still was for one who never took any exercise except pacing up and down her own rooms. She had very pretty feet, narrow and small: she was proud of these and walked in a special way, elegantly, putting her toes down first, and inviting us to do the same, declaring that it was thus all men should walk, a remark which Uncle received with the special grunt he emitted when he disapproved of her utterances.

I have retained a vague memory of the Emperor's followers, but I distinctly remember Graf Paar, chief of Franz Joseph's military household, who took a great fancy to me and showed me much attention. Austrians are very amiable and easy to get on with, and all these gentlemen imagined that they must make up to me, which made me, silly little goose, feel quite important.

I am afraid that this is about all I remember of that royal visit, but I know that it was considered a great success and also beneficial to the good feeling between the two countries which was essential, as very close neighbours are generally not over-fond of each other.

Kaiser Wilhelm never paid a visit to King Carol; all through his life Uncle expected this politeness of the one whom he considered the head of the family, although the Sigmaringen Hohenzollerns were the older line. It was a great deal owing to Cousin Charly and her intrigues that her brother never came to Roumania, for she carefully stimulated any ill feeling existing between the two sovereigns. It is difficult to explain exactly why she did this; I believe her love of mischief was so ingrained that it was a game she could not resist. My husband regretted this deeply, for he would have much liked to see the German Emperor follow the Austrian Emperor's example; but he hoped in vain.

My father prolonged his visit after the Emperor's departure; he liked Sinaia and was contented in our little house and graciously accepted our small daughter's silent attentions, flattered and amused at the child's evident sympathy for him.

Long ago in Aunty's youth, she had had a feeling for my father.

Obedient to his very royal mother's wishes, Papa had, as quite a young man, undertaken a *tourn  e* through the courts of Europe, so as to review the eligible princesses carefully drawn up on a list by Queen Victoria. This list brought him also to Neu Wied to see young Elisabeth, noted for her charm and exceptional intelligence.

Elisabeth of Wied was *schw  rmerisch*, high-flown, poetical; brought up against artists and intellectuals, she loved music, literature, philosophy, was in fact an enthusiast and somewhat of a blue stocking, but a poetical blue stocking full of ideals. Papa was good-looking, his eyes were exceedingly blue and when the young princess and her mother discovered that he played the violin, he was taken out into their beloved beechwoods and had to play to them there under the trees.

It was amusing to hear the way each described their remembrance of this sylvan concert. To Aunty it had remained an outstanding event, a marvellous experience, the recollection of which was cherished all the days of her life.

"It was my one little romance," she told me.

To Papa, alas, it had been one of the chief reasons why he had struck Elisabeth of Wied off his mother's list. To the shy young Englishman this poetical episode had been an excruciatingly painful experience.

Aunty confessed to me what my father had meant to her: a dream that did not come true. I tried to prepare her for the change she would find in her ideal after so many years; but she was sentimentally excited at the thought of seeing him again, and still kept in her heart a vision of a blue-eyed youth with a violin under his chin. . . . Well, of course, it was a disillusion.

First of all Papa had never been what she had imagined, no, not even then in his early youth, for "things are not what they seem"; the violin had never been an essential but only an appendage. It was not young Alfred's everyday habit to play under the trees of the forest; even on that memorable occasion he had done it grudgingly and only to comply with the ecstatic ladies' desire, but this vision of the good-looking young prince with the violin pressed to his cheek was to them the *real* man, such as their poetical fantasy desired him to be. And to-day he was very much the old gentleman, with the ingrained habits of one who saw life as it was and not through particularly rosy spectacles: at that he was of the earth earthy, and had scanty patience with what he termed "sentimental nonsense."

In spite of all this, Aunty still clung to the idea that Papa loved music above all things. She could not help seeing that he had become a rather taciturn old gentleman not in the least given to high-flown rhapsodies, but nothing is more tenacious than an old dream. In spite of the most evident reality, Carmen Sylva, the poet-queen, wanted to awake in this elderly prince, whose illusions had been shed one by one along the road of life, some echo of that far-off day spent under the great beech trees of the Neu Wied forest.

Unfortunately Papa's advent came during the period when Aunty thought she had discovered a musical genius in a painter of doubtful talent. This gentleman has been already mentioned; the absurd old boy who imagined he could sing equally tenor, bass or baritone.

This mistaken enthusiasm for a man really absurd was the reason why a second picnic was organized, Aunty desiring that her protégé should display his talents in a wild and romantic setting. So we once more set forth under Aunty's command, being led through a forest to a wild place amongst rocks, and here, grouped about more or less uncomfortably upon hard stones, we were given a concert I am not going to try to describe.

To make things worse, Aunt, who lived not in a world of realities, liked to assemble many people around her, the more the better, no matter how miscellaneous nor how indiscriminately shuffled together: old and young, rich and poor, of different classes, of different nationalities, the *blasés* as well as the artless, the sophisticated as well as those "poor of spirit"; all these had to follow her lead, for Carmen Sylva needed an audience.

So Papa found himself one of a heterogeneous company which meant nothing to him, and which he passed in review with none too neighbourly feelings. He did not particularly relish being dragged up steep mountain paths, nor did he find either pleasure or repose on his rocky seat.

I was feeling nervous, knowing that my father was somewhat short of temper, nor was he particularly patient or long-suffering; when displeased it was not his way to bury his feelings under a mask of amiability. So I watched him anxiously, knowing that his nerves were going to be severely tried.

I had two young English girl friends with me and we exchanged apprehensive glances; we saw the humorous side of the situation, we were accustomed to Aunt's eccentricities, but we realized that Papa's British conventionality was going to receive something of a shock.

And a shock indeed it did receive. The pseudo-singer did his worst, appearing suddenly from behind a rock, and striking an heroic attitude considered in keeping with the mountain background, gave vent to a series of extraordinary sounds which Aunt listened to with clasped hands.

I sat as close to Papa as I dared, with the feeling that I could ward off disaster. When displeased he had a way of sticking out his underlip in a sort of pout, which we always considered a danger signal and it meant that we had to tread carefully. Once he turned to me and said:

"This is outrageous; am I to be made a fool of?"

"No, no, Papa, but just wait a little and I shall invent some excuse to get off."

And get off we did, at least, before the storm burst, but the ordeal had been terrible; my knees were actually shaking when I got up, but I cannot remember what plausible excuse I found for carrying Papa off,

leaving to her concert Auntie and all those who had followed in her wake.

Papa kept snorting his indignation all the way home, angry with each stone his toes met along the steep descent.

"Is that what you call singing here in Roumania?"

"No, no, Papa, but Auntie, you know . . ."

"No, I don't know, and don't want to; I had the feeling of being in a lunatic asylum!"

"No, no! but Auntie, you see . . ."

"No, I don't see, and don't want to see; it was preposterous!"

And thus all the way home.

Later, when Papa had left, Auntie one day said to me with a sigh:

"Darling, I did not find a trace in him of the young man who was my dream; such a pity, nothing at all, not even his love for music."

And that moment, sadly feeling the difference of being or not being a poet, I gently tried to explain:

"You see, Auntie, not many people at sixty are just as they were at twenty-one."

"I have not changed much," said Auntie. And this indeed was true.

The Princess's guests were somewhat of an anxiety to the "Old Palace," they were inclined to upset the safe order of things. The one who awoke the most apprehension was Cousin Boris. Being a grand duke he could not be easily set aside and had to be received with every honour, but the moment this young man appeared on the scene, Castel Peleş lighted all its danger signals.

Cousin Boris brought with him a whiff of that repudiated *monde où l'on s'amuse*. He, too, dangerously stood for all those things carefully eliminated from our well-regulated existence, tuned to duty not to pleasure. From the point of view of conventional safety I quite understand that King Carol dreaded our coalition; Boris most evidently represented that pleasant side of life from which I was to be steadily isolated.

Boris was a good fellow, but from the point of view of my educators, he was certainly *pas de tout repos*.

He was gay, irresponsible, wild and sentimental by turns, rich, over-prodigious, carefree, full of fun and nonsense; for all that, at heart he

was sad and full of "spleen," he had about him that touch of the imponderable so peculiar to the Russian, something unaccountable, unfathomable, which made him a stimulating but also a somewhat disquieting companion. In most Russians there is that strange something, a mixture of saint and sinner, and one can never know which side will suddenly predominate. There was however little of the saint about Boris!

The "Old Palace" anxiously watched the development of our association; when Boris was let loose amongst us anything might be expected, as he lived according to his whims; loving fun and excitement, he looked for it everywhere. He loved riding and also the showy, glittering side of military life, but he also adored music and poetry and could be very sentimental.

Once he came with his younger brother André, a youth with an adorable pink-and-white, chubby face; another time he was with my brother Alfred, and a very ardent A.D.C.: Alfred was accompanied by three military comrades; I also had an Englishman in the house and learnt during that autumn season how difficult it was for a very young hostess to cope with half a dozen jealous admirers at a time and vowed that never again would I unite so many males together under my roof.

Both Alfred and Boris were enchanted with Roumania, it was quite a discovery to them. They did not see it from the side which had been presented to me, but according to the pleasures it could offer. Amongst these was the gipsy music, for which they had a real passion. Innocently unaware that this sort of music was principally associated with dissipated forms of amusement, I used to send for the "Lăutars" whenever my guests clamoured for them, generally in the evening, till Uncle stepped in with his veto, forbidding that Ciolac and his dark-faced band should play so often in our house.

According to popular Roumanian custom, the gipsy minstrels go with you everywhere, they appear at every picnic, every country excursion, whenever two or three are gathered together, not for prayer but for fun. They are indispensable at weddings and christenings, but also turn up at funerals when their violins have a special wail. The gipsy band is an inherent part of Roumanian life, a quaint and picturesque annexe which Nando and I had adopted almost unawares. You never

had to *call* for the gipsies, they were always there of themselves, like the flies or the mosquitoes, their sometimes rapturous, sometimes wild and always wailing music accompanied every entertainment, adding to these a certain weird charm special to the country.

Even when we went out for our riding picnics Ciolac and his followers managed to appear, and there was certainly a good deal of wild riding when Boris was there, and these exciting cavalcades occasionally rather strongly resembled our Malta rides. My Roşiori officers replaced the naval officers, Cousin Boris was there instead of kind Cousin George. Only there were about ten years between the two, and I was no more a little girl but a married lady.

I especially remember a fatal afternoon when Boris lamed a horse lent by the palace, by chasing a score of peaceful cattle grazing in a field. We pretended we were cowboys rounding up a herd of bullocks, which meant some rather violent gallops over none too good ground.

Of course a huge fuss was made about the laming of this royal horse; no one regretted it more than I did, it was quite against my riding-code to lame a horse, "but accidents will happen even in the best regulated families" and we had to face as best we could the trouble we had brought down upon our heads.

It can well be imagined how gleefully the Chief Inquisitor seized upon these somewhat extravagant exploits of the young to weave out of them endless dark tales with which to shock the Pharisees.

But every dog must have his day, so I suppose I had to have mine. I only know this: whatever day I did have I paid for, tenfold, but I was ready to do so. Life is life and has to be lived with its ups and downs; its hours of folly as well as its long periods of cold common sense, all go for the building up and gradual forming of a character. I regret nothing, and love to look back upon these sudden outbursts of irrepressible enjoyment when the spirit of fun drove all caution away, when every risk seemed worth while as long as we could laugh to our heart's content. There had to be occasional cures of laughter so as to save us from becoming old before our time.

Gradually my friendships became more sober; it must be remembered that in those Boris days I was little more than twenty years old, and royal or not, youth demands its right which, if entirely denied,

finally sours the temper or finds an outlet in things less safe than chasing bullocks in a field and listening to gipsy music.

Through every phase of my education and apprenticeship on the road of life, I remained a healthy, normal young woman, taking my pleasure when I could, but also accepting the manifold duties imposed upon me. I was certainly not worldly-wise, but never was I morose or resentful. Reproof made my cheeks flame and tears come to my eyes, but although I suffered from being so often unfairly judged and criticized I always endeavoured to understand *why* others were so unkind and tried to look at myself from their point of view. I have always had a disconcerting way of excusing my enemy, I harbour an invincible idealism which drives me to see the good in people. Treason is excruciating pain to me, so I would rather find the fault in myself than accept the thought of deliberate deceit in others. I always say: "They do not really understand, there is some mistake somewhere, people don't act like that; it is not natural. . . ."

If this attitude is considered too stupid, I must explain that the completely shady sides of life never came my way, my protected, somewhat isolated and very much guarded life saved me from these, and I therefore preserved a sort of naïveté, or sort of ignorance about sordid things which allowed me to have an unembarrassed attitude towards the world and all those therein, male and female. I was completely unaware of those dark undercurrents beneath the outward appearance of things, and this preserved in me a sort of ingenuousness which some took for pose or even for very excellent acting; but there was no acting about it; I was genuinely ignorant of what most people knew or had even experienced.

Much, much later in life, I was immeasurably shocked and pained when through horrible talk, it was little by little revealed to me what people said and thought of each other, and still more horrified when I realized that some of what was related was founded upon truth. This was indeed a nasty discovery.

Perhaps my conception of life and people was based upon illusions and unreality, nevertheless I am grateful that these revelations came to me so late in life; it made my youth happier, I breathed purer air, it kept my thoughts clean, my courage unclouded, and gave me that enthusiastic impetus towards all that was fine, high, great, which would

certainly have been tarnished had I known that things were not as they seemed. For my special sort of work it was better to believe in humanity, or I could never have become the leader and helper in the hour of need.

If those of the "Old Palace" criticized our guests, we on our side were often bored by those who came to Castel Peleş.

Late summer and autumn were mostly the seasons when these put in an appearance, and we were expected to do our share of the entertaining, and a constant contact was kept up between our two houses. We were especially obliged to take part in the long and wearisome meals, followed by still longer and more wearisome *cercles*; Uncle reserving this hour for earnest conversation with people not received in special audience.

These *cercles* took place in the so-called Maurischer Saal, a long room with windows on both sides and no furniture except rows of seats against the walls; a room little conducive to cosiness—and no one was ever supposed to sit down.

Especially the lunches were our despair, it meant dressing up in the middle of the day and curtailing the precious summer afternoons when we longed to be out in the woods.

Uncle expected his family to submit to these daily repeated ordeals. He had no idea of the meaning of country life and carried the ennui of Bucarest over into his mountain residence. For the first few years I submitted unresignedly to this order of things; I had not yet found my footing, but later, in spite of Nando's frowns, I would liberate myself by going straight up to Uncle and declaring that the children and the sunshine outside were calling to me, might I go?

Uncle was at first rather astonished, and probably also displeased at this liberty I was taking; no one as yet had dared to have ideas of their own, but he gradually got accustomed to my unconventionalities and finally smiled upon my impatience. I was never aggressive, only very frank, explaining to him why I wanted to be off, and finally he would indulgently pat me on the shoulder: "Geh nur, ich weiss Du kannst es in Hause nicht länger aushalten."

When Nando reproved me for my lack of conventional manners, I tried to explain to him that useless sacrifice falsifies values. It was in-

finitely more important to me not to waste those precious summer afternoons than it was for Uncle to hold me there, a bored and useless witness of his long political talks with what seemed to me then, exceedingly dull people.

Aunty took refuge in being a martyr or in going to sleep with a smile on her lips which made us all feel most uncomfortable, but I had no martyr's vocation and my desperate yawns were even more compromising than Aunty's snoozing. After that it only needed a little courage to break through rules which had no logical foundation; a habit could just as well become established in my favour as against it: again a question of values. . . .

It is a mistake to submit to the "intolerable." It is of no use to anyone. It was a sort of instinct of self-preservation which gave me the courage to throw off that which bred in me feelings of exasperation. I was more useful to the community at large when my patience was not tried beyond breaking point. Some people put their pride in bearing the unbearable, some in breaking through it; I had better feelings towards Uncle when I did not submit to illogical tyrannies, I did not care to lie low and growl and complain behind his back, I preferred taking the bull by the horns and establishing once and for all a situation supportable to all sides. And this, after the first shock of encounter, was peacefully accepted and smoothly woven into the everyday order of things, which meant that in this at least I had scored.

There were two things at which my royal patience struck; one was this wasting of summer afternoons, and the other was over-long church services. I got out of these whenever I could, trying to make up in other ways for this leaving undone of things that ought to be done.

I love the Orthodox service, but I consider the long standing little conducive to devotion, as finally one cannot help thinking more about one's feet than about God, nor could I ever feel in sympathy with prayers indefinitely repeated; I had the sensation that the Most High was being as much tried as I was.

I like to pray my own prayers and later in life I wrote a "Queen's Prayer," which I shall perhaps cite later on. Eternal repetitions are one of the most tedious trials of life, even the daily putting on of one's stockings becomes a drudgery from which one would gladly escape if one could invent some form of *Ersatz*.

There is a chronic impatience in my blood, a constant revolt against all servitude, be it of the body or of the spirit, and yet patience has been the very basis of my life and success, a royal, never-ending, cruelly long patience which never dared be denied.

Now to return to Uncle and Aunt's guests.

Undeniably one of the most interesting and entertaining was Ferdinand of Bulgaria. He came more than once; as Prince with his first wife, mother of his children, and later as King with his second wife Leonore, but he also came alone, and I must confess that his appearance in our midst was always welcome to me because he was so extraordinarily amusing.

Both Uncle Carol and Uncle Ferdinand were considered clever politicians and diplomats, which they undeniably were, but their schools were very different.

There was not much love lost between these two sovereigns, but their politeness towards each other was irreproachable and admirable; a grand display of perfect manners. For the looker-on it was as good as a play to see them together, because greater contrasts it would have been difficult to find.

Der Onkel was earnest, somewhat pompous, took himself and his work tremendously seriously, and certainly his methods were as upright and devoid of double dealing as is compatible with the professions of reigning and diplomacy; but Uncle was entirely devoid of a sense of humour, nor did he understand the art of small talk and elegant conversation. Uncle was in fact somewhat of a pedant.

Imagine as contrast Ferdinand of Coburg, world-renowned for his intelligence and love of intrigue, which he professed like a fine art. The French blood running in his veins made of him an incomparable *causeur*, his repartees were sparkling, his irony light, intangible, and always to the point. Sharp-witted, all-observing, with a superfine sense of humour, he often indulged in the delicate luxury of laughing at himself, of making fun of his looks, his idiosyncrasies, his tastes, his likes and dislikes. All this furnished subjects for endless witty conversation and allowed him to use his sarcasm to his heart's content.

Ferdinand was also an artist to his finger-tips, art was bread and

water to him, and as botanist and biologist his equal were difficult to find even in the scientific world; his love for flowers, plants and animals was deep-rooted and convincing.

There may have been less comfortable sides to Uncle Ferdinand's nature, but a more pleasant, stimulating and erudite companion, when he set out to charm his audience, cannot be imagined.

To anyone with a sense of humour, to see the two kings together was really exceedingly entertaining.

Uncle always took himself seriously at all hours of the day, at all seasons of the year and in every company. Life was to him a long chain of important events, nor did he ever ease this attitude of heavy earnestness, whilst Bulgaria's monarch was a great actor.

Il aimait s'écouter and saw himself in the parts it in turn pleased him to interpret, be it that of a wily, ceremonious politician, the easily offended ruler whose every susceptibility must be respected, or that of the debonair, polite, sarcastic *homme du monde*, super-refined, all smiles and amiability, or even that of the sombre, almost tragic, tyrant of a mysterious country always in ebullition. His talk would then be of danger, plague, treason and sudden death; his voice would become dramatic, his accents thrilling, and he managed to evoke sinister pictures full of dark possibilities. But never for a moment during these recitations would he quite lose that expression of half-amused irony, in fact he had almost a wink in that small, sly, all-seeing eye of his, meant for those clever enough to share with him the fun he was having by thus incorporating these different exciting personalities.

Physically, these two monarchs were also interesting contrasts, Uncle æsthetic, sparse, with no pretence to elegance, blue-blooded but for all that a self-made man, proud of his achievements with just a touch of naïveté about him because he took himself so hopelessly *au sérieux*. Uncle was a soldier and somewhat of a Spartan, or better said: there was something of the monk about King Carol. But Bulgaria's ruler was tall, his figure somewhat ponderous, a sybarite fond of discussing his health, posing as a valetudinarian, averse from physical effort, caring for his ease and comfort, exceedingly *soigné* as to dress and general elegance, grand seigneur to the point of decadence, sarcastic about himself and others, always having the laugh on his side. His



KING FERDINAND OF BULGARIA, A PORTRAIT HE HIMSELF CALLS
"ULTIMA PHASIS"



THE TIME OF BIG HATS

small, watchful eyes were set rather closely together over a nose no doubt very aristocratic, but certainly of exaggerated proportions.

An ardent lover of beauty, Uncle Ferdinand was well aware that his nose was too prominent a feature, so he was for ever mentioning this unfortunate appendage which he called *die Dulderin* (the sufferer) and once showing me a group photograph of which he formed the centre he said to me in his somewhat nasal voice, "Avec ces tout petits yeux et ce nez comme une trompe, ne suis-je pas tout à fait comme un éléphant? Mais, ma chère nièce, j'ai aussi toute la sagacité de ce si vénérable quadrupède"—and then he could laugh a little in the way of poor "Aunt Philippa," his eyes completely disappearing, drawing in the air in a peculiar way through that offending nose.

Ferdinand of Bulgaria had a strange passion for precious stones, he would fondle them as though their touch gave him almost physical ecstasy. Considering me a worthy audience, he would bring out his different little stories for my benefit, knowing that I appreciated his subtleties, and thus he once drew a picture of himself which I have never forgotten, a picture where he is seated all by himself in a dimly lighted chamber, draped in a long black velvet dressing-gown fingering his priceless gems: "Peux-tu me voir, tout de noir vêtu, laissant rubis, saphirs, émeraudes, perles et diamants couler entre mes doigts; drappé de velours, tout seul dans une demie-obscurité, très chère nièce, c'était, je te l'assure, une vraie volupté."

Uncle Ferdinand had beautifully kept, very white hands and wore his nails overlong, and looking at those pale fingers, ever afterwards it seemed to me that I saw the many-coloured gems slipping through them one by one.

In everyday life these pale fingers were covered with beautiful rings; his gestures were slow, had about them something of a priest officiating in church; besides, he always wore a cross attached to a chain hidden beneath his coat or uniform, and he was continually toying with this cross, declaring that it gave him a venerable, almost a sacerdotal, air. I think Uncle Ferdinand would have very much enjoyed being the Pope.

I loved talking to him about flowers and animals, it was like turning over the pages of a superbly written book; he had travelled through

many countries and could tell me with the minutest details where the rarest flowers grew, describing the soil in which they thrived, their habits, colour, perfume, and his language was so descriptive that picture upon picture passed before my eyes.

King Ferdinand had the disconcerting talent of being able to keep up two conversations at a time. He often indulged in this whilst talking with King Carol, whose wit was less chameleon-like. His serious, pompous discourse, was for the King, his amusing "asides" for the younger generation, but these were so smoothly woven into his speech that, before Uncle could notice any byplay, he was back again in the middle of his political dissertation as though there had never been any deviation from the central subject.

Once at a big dinner at Bucarest, I was sitting on his left. It was just after he had declared himself king and he was on his way back from Russia. He had been officially received with every honour, for Uncle Ferdinand was a great stickler as to etiquette; outwardly he was on his best behaviour, exceedingly ceremonious, covered with decorations, honey dripping from his lips. Speeches befitting the occasion were pronounced on both sides, he had just sat down again after having delivered himself of his most amiable discourse, glasses had been raised, healths drunk, then leaning over towards me, his wee eyes sparkling with mischief, he whispered into my ear: "*Et très chère nièce, il faut savoir qu'au fond nous nous détestons!*" But I was given to understand that, having Coburg blood in my veins, I was not included in this "detestation."

Such was King Ferdinand of Bulgaria, seen by a niece who, herself not lacking in humour, was occasionally allowed a peep behind the scenes; it can be well imagined that I thoroughly enjoyed his occasional appearance in our midst.

I am afraid however that this uniquely entertaining gentleman was not the most comfortable of husbands. Both his wives stood in great awe of him and would never have dared oppose his will in the smallest degree. Poor delicate Marie Louise was a frail, small woman with a long, rather melancholy Greco face, wearing the many magnificent jewels with which her husband had overwhelmed her, as though they were a burden beyond her strength. Her large washed-out blue eyes had

a resigned, pathetic expression; she was what she looked, a sad woman with not enough health to endure all that was expected of her. She bore her exigent master four children and then she died, and death was probably her happy release.

Born a Bourbon of Parma she was very aristocratic and intensely Catholic, so that any derogation from this faith was to her mortal sin, yet, just she had to bear the grief of seeing her eldest son rechristened in the Orthodox Church after having first been baptized a Catholic. She never got over this blow, so she allowed the first serious illness which came to her to carry her off from this world of pain and deception.

Eleonora of Reuss, the King's second wife, was quite another type. She was a Protestant and a much more vigorous and independent woman, who during the Russo-Japanese War had gone out as nurse to the wounded. She knew life and had faced it squarely; she had an altruistic spirit, was practical, energetic, and almost middle-aged when she became the second Queen of Bulgaria, but to say that she was happy would, I think, be an exaggeration.

She served her people with generous abnegation, was a wonderful sister of charity during the Balkan, and later the World, War, but she died before peace was concluded.

Eleonora was some relation of Auntie, and once she came to Sinaia without her overpowering husband, and on this occasion we were able to appreciate her sense of fun and good-humour; she enjoyed our family circle and brought with her two of the most beautiful Skye terriers I have ever seen. When I think of Aunt Eleonora I always see her with those two superb canine friends.

Auntie was occasionally visited by friends of her youth, and foremost amongst these was Frau von Deichman, born a Bunsen, and Marie Bunsen, who was, I think, her niece, or was she her sister-in-law? I cannot quite remember.

Frau von Deichman had been a beauty in her youth and still had a perfect profile and long, narrow, aristocratic hands which she folded before her in a placid way. Frau von Deichman was in fact one of the most serene and imperturbable women I ever met. She spoke in a slow almost drawling way and could say the most amusing and also the

most downright things without in the least changing the expression of her face or the diapason of her voice. She always looked straight before her as though gazing into distance; but in spite of this absent-minded air she was all there and though adoring Aunty with unshakable loyalty, she very often put a gentle damper on her exaggerated exuberance or brought her back to reality when her speech began to soar into too irrational spheres.

They had been playfellows, so this tranquil lady had the privilege of an old and tried friend who had shared joy and pain through many years. Her unshakable calm was in amusing contrast with Aunty's impetuosity. She always addressed her as "dear Majesty." All her sentences began with this appellation: "Dear Majesty, I think you are exaggerating just a little," "Dear Majesty, allow me to disagree, here your dear Majesty's memory is somewhat at fault," "Your dear Majesty is inclined to see through a prism which somewhat distorts or enlarges facts, allow me to bring them down to less poetic dimensions," etc. . . . etc. . . . And all this would be said with hands folded in her lap, eyes half closed and without accentuating any part of her sentences; she spoke in fact as though addressing no one in particular, only pronouncing absolute if not specially important verities.

Frau von Deichman had been exceedingly hospitable to my husband and myself when we were in England during King Edward's Coronation, and always showed me a warm sympathy I was not often accustomed to encounter in Aunty's entourage.

Old Mr. Deichman, her husband, although almost blind, had a passion for horses and for driving a coach-and-four, and what particularly attracted me in his house was that he had had a passage made joining his drawing-room on to his stables. Of this I entirely approved.

For Marie Bunsen I felt great sympathy. There was a sort of English independence about her which fitted in with my way of looking at life, something breezy and of the open air which was invigorating; besides, she was truly an artist at heart and painted beautifully in water-colours. We used to enjoy discussing the furnishing of rooms, each of us allowing our imagination free play, exchanging ideas, interested in each other's views upon this subject which fascinates all women who love their homes. I remember how she told me she had painted her floors and doors bright blue, which was a quaint idea.

Marie von Bunsen was one of the "Old Palace" guests I most liked being with; in those days I thought she had kindly feelings towards me, but do we ever know the inner workings of the human heart, and do we ever cease having our illusions torn from us one by one?

Of Aunty's Wied nephews and nieces I was exceedingly fond. They appeared at Sinaia from time to time and were charming young people who spoke excellent English. I made special friends with the youngest, Victor, a diplomat. All these brothers and sisters had perfect manners which did not exclude a pleasant sense of humour. None of them was really good-looking, but they were tall and very aristocratic. There was something unusual about their faces which were curiously lean, their mouths were large and well filled with strong white teeth, but when they smiled or laughed their skin had a special way of creasing over their bones, it gave them something a little wizened but for all that attractive.

King Gustav of Sweden also came once to Sinaia. He was Queen Elisabeth's first cousin, their mothers having been sisters. He was a charming gentleman, simple, friendly and ready to enjoy anything, and ever since that visit I kept in touch with him. There was also a special link between us as his heir had married my first cousin, Margaret, eldest daughter of the Duke of Connaught, who died, alas, soon after the Great War.

But the visit of which I have kept most amused remembrance is the visit of Emma, the Dowager Queen of Holland. Emma was also Aunty's first cousin and although absolute contrasts as to ways, manners and disposition, there was an almost uncanny resemblance between them. They were as two plants raised from the same stock, but having been planted in different soils they had developed differently, each having unconsciously absorbed something of the genius of the land to which they had given their lives.

Both were tall, stout, florid, with exaggeratedly high foreheads, and both wore spectacles over blue, short-sighted eyes; but in spite of this undeniable physical resemblance, which struck you the moment you saw them together, their personalities were exact opposites.

Aunty had developed along ethereal, idealistic lines, casting from her all that was prosaic, practical, *terre à terre*. With a superb indiffer-

ence to facts, Carmen Sylva's imagination had created for her an unsubstantial, poetic world little based upon reality.

Queen Emma, on the contrary, was of the earth earthy, a staid, matronly, matter-of-fact lady who kept her fantasy (if she had any) well under control. For many years, during Queen Wilhelmina's childhood, she had been Regent of the Netherlands and had absorbed the placidity of that steady and sober country which she had ruled with male efficiency. She understood all about diplomacy, politics, finance, economy, about laws, rules, routines, conventions, about the sternly sedate, legal side of all things which are the accepted basis of State, Society and progress. Queen Emma had no illusions; Queen Emma *knew*.

It was a pity perhaps that her outward appearance was not in the least imposing or majestic, she looked like a kindly housekeeper with her goody-goody lace cap, her comfortable girth and her eminently respectable but in no wise regal attire.

In my youthful disrespect I had dubbed her *die Obergouvernante* (head-governess), a name, it must be confessed, which rather unduly enchanted Auntie who had to endure a good deal of education whilst Cousin Emma, the ex-Regent, was in the house.

Cousin Emma, accustomed to rule, advise, admonish, considered that "Elsa," as she called Auntie, had developed on too unconventional and eccentric lines; she disapproved of her poetical form of speech, of her daring flights of imagination and the positive, prosaic words with which she made Carmen Sylva return to earth again, had certainly something wing-clipping about them. Queen Emma's remarks were each time an anticlimax of the most damping kind. They made poor Auntie suddenly appear almost ridiculous, the wind was mercilessly taken out of her sails, her impetuosity frustrated; it was as though, joyfully flying a kite of many colours, someone had suddenly cut the string and she found herself with nothing but a limp thread in hand, the beautiful kite, a thing of dreams, having vanished into space. Never did Auntie and I feel so instinctively in sympathy with each other as during Queen Emma's stay. I especially remember one scene I witnessed which is worth recounting, because so amusingly characteristic of their different attitude towards things in general and poetical literature in particular.

Aunty had a pleasant, clever young secretary called Dal'Orso. He was of Italian origin, small, vivacious and was possessor of a splendid mop of thick, naturally waved, brown hair and of many agreeable talents such as singing, violin playing, reading aloud and witty talk; he was in fact sometimes a little too witty for his situation. Devoted as he was to Aunty, the peculiar composition of her surroundings and hangers-on would periodically fill him with a comic exasperation which occasionally induced him to forget his court manners and express or demean himself in a way the Chief Inquisitor could not be expected to approve of.

I much enjoyed listening to Dal'Orso's reading. In the long Sinaia autumn evenings Aunty would gather her company about her and there would be either music or reading aloud, or sometimes only conversation whilst the ladies sat around with their work. When Dal'Orso was the leader of these gatherings, they were mostly amusing and interesting. His vigorous youth refreshed the atmosphere, though it occasionally became somewhat electrical, because of those who disapproved of his free and easy manner.

On this particular evening the two queenly cousins were installed in two comfortable arm-chairs, facing each other, shaded lamps throwing a discreet light over their busy fingers.

Aunty, in overflowing white draperies with a white veil on her head, was handling with elegant gestures which showed off her finely shaped hands, a tatting shuttle, whilst Holland's dowager, in sober grey, lace cap and all, was demurely drawing a prosaic thread through something which looked useful.

The two royal ladies kept watching each other with guarded glances, more like rivals than two old friends.

Dal'Orso was reading Maeterlinck's "*Vie des Abeilles*," and of all things the chapter selected was the one describing the queen-bee's nuptial flight.

This flight is depicted in majestically poetical language. It shows us the sovereign-insect soaring high and ever higher into the heavens, pursued by a swarm of eager lovers. Up, up she mounts, those in her wake falling back one by one, exhausted, unable to sustain the strain of such a flight. Finally only one remains, and up there in the eternal blue, the marriage is consummated, and in a final rapture, the victorious

lover gives his all, even his life, succumbing in the effort. Consumed by his own ecstasy, the male falls to pieces, his useless remains floating earthwards to become dust, the conqueror vanquished; whilst the queen, saturated with new life, rises higher and higher, into the very heart of the sun. And when finally she returns from heaven to earth, she is pregnant with a new generation.

Aunt followed each sentence with exclamations of admiration; letting her shuttle fall, she would clasp her hands in rapturous appreciation, almost swooning with delighted emotion at the thought of the Queen's return to become in all reality "the Mother of her people." The idea that the venturesome male should fall to pieces so piteously in his supreme effort to capture ecstasy seemed to fill her with almost unholy satisfaction.

Queen Emma, on the contrary, sat with tight lips; this was not the sort of literature she approved of. These exaggerations of language were not to her taste: marriage was marriage, a cross, like any other which a woman of duty submitted to without complaints, nor could a wife expect her husband, pleasant or otherwise, to fall to pieces in the effort of possession, it belonged to the things which "were not done."

I must confess that the *Obergouvernante* expressed nothing of this aloud, but the look she threw Dal'Orso and her poet cousin spoke volumes; it needed no words. . . .

Uncle had often to receive military deputations from different countries such as Russia, Germany, Austria, Spain, etc. . . .

My husband and I enjoyed these visits. Nando from a military point of view, I because many of the officers were young and pleasant, full of go and above all quite delighted to be so well received in a country still very little known.

Of course it fell to Uncle's share to entertain the older and more important gentlemen, the generals and colonels, etc., whilst we were often asked to amuse those less high up in rank, and it even became an established habit to expect me to take these eager gentlemen for rides up into the mountains, because Uncle was proud of his Sinaia and wanted it to be seen, known and appreciated.

In those days I kept not only big riding horses but also a collection

of mountain ponies; as at an early age I had taught my children to ride, so each of them had their own mount which came in useful on these occasions, sturdy little animals up to any weight which were ready to climb the steepest paths, even with grown men on their backs. It was amusing to observe how useful I and my horses became on these occasions, and many a gay cavalcade do I remember, followed by a company of admiring military gentlemen, and it must be confessed that it often delighted me to astonish them with my daring.

On a man's saddle, dressed in my Cossack's costume, I would lead them over paths little suitable for a royal lady. Sure of my fierce-looking Cerkess, riding well ahead, up and down precipitous tracks, I would revel in giving them one scare after another. No wonder they left with the impression that I was a rather wild if somewhat elusive young woman, "a good one to follow, a hard one to beat."

During these rides I learnt a good deal about nationalities and also about the ways of men. The Germans were beautifully polite, always a little pedantic and inclined to explain all things, even those that I knew better than they did; they had preconceived ideas about everything, which they stuck to even against proof to the contrary. Their attentions were somewhat heavy but *chevaleresque*. The Austrians were amiable, pleasant, easy-going and had the right feeling about sport, they were real horse-lovers and knew how to talk to a lady. The Russians were disconcertingly *enflammable*, ever ready to do their lady's bidding, daring, over-eager, inclined to folly; their admiration was not always easy to keep within bounds.

I treated them all in a strictly comradely fashion, and when compliments became a little too personal, I had a way of looking over their heads as though admiring the sky, which without the help of words quickly puts a man back in his right place. I discovered that the best way of keeping an admirer at a safe distance was to act as though I did not in the least understand what he was trying to tell me. This invariably took the wind out of his sails.

My love of fun and adventure and that queer touch of the child I had kept in my make-up, made me plan a funny little hut right up in the crown of the trees. This amusing idea fascinated Mr. Lecomte, Uncle's private architect, and he designed for me a delightfully original little

house suspended in mid-air between hug fir trees. It can easily be imagined what a delight this fairy-story house was to my children.

It consisted of three rooms, a broad balcony and a gallery running along one side, overlooking a great depth. One of the rooms was quite a good size; I had painted it white with a frieze of huge scarlet poppies close under the ceiling. I also found a tea-service painted with red poppies which delightfully matched the frieze. This room opened into a much smaller one which I had stained a sober green, and here I had accumulated quaint objects, such as old pieces of pottery, copper, brass, hanging a few attractive prints on the walls. A cover of dull orange, heaped up with rust-tinted cushions, was spread over a long deck-chair. The colour scheme was most attractive and of course I kept the place full of flowers. The third room was merely a kitchen in which real repasts could be prepared if I wished to spread a feast before my guests. The interest aroused by the "Princess's nest" was great and everybody wanted to see it.

This eyrie was reached by a stairway hidden in a wooden tower, copied from our peasant belfries, and between belfry and house there was a drawbridge leading over to my elevated retreat; when I drew this up, I was in a fortress and could defy the world below.

There, amongst the tree-tops, was absolute solitude, and on days of storm my snug retreat rocked slightly with the giant firs, whilst the wind, sighing amongst their crowns, was like the sound of the sea.

It was not only our children who delighted in this little house; although my absurd idea had at first been loudly mocked at, everybody wanted to cross my drawbridge and see my "nest" from within. Even Uncle, that stern man without imagination, had succumbed to the charm of my "folly," and, of all unexpected things, would insist upon my giving tea-parties there to the guests he found difficult to entertain.

Thus did my humble "Juniperus," as I called my tree-habitation, open wide its doors to all manner of men, and my beloved retreat was invaded by important and sometimes heavily dull people, quite out of keeping with the delicious absurdity of the place.

Der Onkel could not officially approve of my eccentricities, but sometimes, in spite of himself, he enjoyed them; he certainly delighted in bringing his guests up to "Juniperus" as it was a unique little construc-

tion, which he almost came to look upon as an invention of his own.

I kept a "Juniperus" visitors' book, between the leaves of which I had painted the wild flowers of Sinaia, and this book testifies to the number and quality of those I received, from Ferdinand of Bulgaria down to the humblest little lieutenant who was entertained on days when the great of this world had more important things to do than to let themselves be gently rocked on the tree-tops.

In former days, Uncle's only way of amusing his guests was a staid drive to Bușteni, a little townlet farther up the Prahova valley where he had, in earlier days, built a little village church of melancholy coloured stone. This modest ashen-hued edifice stood in an enclosure strewn with heavy grey gravel which got into your shoes. The only embellishment of this uninteresting place was a lean little fountain ensconced in a too regular flower-bed, which sent up a meagre and crooked spray that always looked depressed; besides, the church stood with its back to the mountains and was enclosed on all sides by nondescript houses which blocked out every view. Perhaps when Uncle erected this church, many years ago, its surroundings may have been rural and attractive, but this was a thing of the past: I believe, however, that Uncle never noticed this; to him it was still a lovely and picturesque place, otherwise it was difficult to understand why he continued driving his guests here for his so-called picnics.

A table would be erected against a wooden paling as grey as the church itself and here, followed by our numerous suites, we set out to be deliberately jovial, whilst stale ham and chicken sandwiches were handed round and Auntie bravely raved about the Carpathian air and the beauty of mountain and sky.

My tree-house came as a welcome break in this dismal habit of the Bușteni church, and henceforth Uncle directed the steps of his guests, be they king, archduke, bishop, general or minister, towards his niece's eyrie and there with my uncrushable high spirits I would serve tea in my poppy-painted cups and hand round delicacies less stale than the royal sandwiches.

My guests "oh-ed" and "ah-ed," amused, but also a little breathless, for my "nest" was perched high up and the climb was none too easy for those unaccustomed to mountain paths.

Soon after the War my "Juniperus" was blown down in a violent storm and, being no more the giddy young princess of whom Uncle had undertaken the education, I did not rebuild it.

An old stone cross I had once placed there, now alone marks the spot to which Uncle solemnly brought so many guests.

Tout passe. . . .

One of the last important visitors Uncle received at Sinaia was the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, of fatal memory, nephew of the old Emperor Franz Joseph, and declared heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne after the tragic death of the Emperor's only son, Rudolf.

Franz Ferdinand was accompanied by his morganatic wife, Fürstin Hohenberg, whom Uncle and Auntie received with almost royal honour, somewhat to that lady's embarrassment, as at the Viennese court her husband had never been able to obtain for her the position he would have desired, for Franz Ferdinand dearly loved his wife.

Fürstin Hohenberg was an amiable, decorative lady, very tall and very Viennese-looking with somewhat stereotyped and conventional manners. I cannot say that I was strongly attracted to her, but Auntie, who had a pronounced sympathy for morganatic marriages, made a great fuss over her, clasped her to her heart, showering so many attentions upon her that she was quite bewildered, but her admirable manners and excellent court education stood her in good stead and she knew, with perfect tact, how to steer through every difficulty; being neither too humble nor too forward, she played her part beautifully and to the satisfaction of all sides.

Born a Countess Chotek, Fürstin Hohenberg had been lady-in-waiting to an important and very wealthy Archduchess who had many daughters to marry off. Instead of falling in love with one of the Imperial young ladies, Franz Ferdinand, alas, fell in love with the lady-in-waiting and married her in face of all opposition, and to the old Emperor's extreme annoyance.

The marriage, however, was a perfect success, and several children were born to the loving couple, who however were not qualified to inherit the throne; so Karl, the son of Franz Ferdinand's late brother Otto, was designated as his eventual successor.

Franz Ferdinand was well disposed towards Roumania. No friend

of the Hungarians, he tried to take those Roumanians under his protection who were being oppressed by Hungarian sway. This had endeared him to King Carol; his visit was therefore very welcome, and we were given to understand that we must in all ways manifest our good will and satisfaction, with which we gracefully complied.

A noisy and crowded reception was given to the Imperial guest at the Sinaia station, accompanied by the usual guard of honour, cheering, speeches and over-many bouquets. In my memory it remains marked by an unworthily trivial detail. We were at the period of exaggeratedly enormous hats, flowery or befeathered constructions which we balanced with some difficulty on our heads with the aid of occasional tufts of false hair and unduly long hat-pins.

As already several times mentioned, Roumanian receptions are flatteringly warm and enthusiastic, but excessive order is not their speciality, or certainly was not in those "good old days," there was always a disconcerting amount of jostling, pushing, crushing and toe-treading, and I distinctly remember the extreme disadvantage of my large hat on this genial, but in no way comfortable occasion; it was most disastrously in the way and I was constantly in fear of its shipwreck. Fürstin Hohenberg's hat beat even mine as to size, and was in constant danger of being displaced by the too-eager excitement of those all crushing towards the centre of interest.

King Carol made us go through the usual round reserved for these official occasions; luncheons, dinners, speeches, music in Aunty's private apartment, military parades and of course the Buşteni tea-party near the depressingly grey church.

Our so-called picnic clothes, donned for this occasion, have been immortalized by a supremely absurd photographic group, big hats, voluminous veils and all the rest, including Aunty's motor-cap and Franz Ferdinand's country clothes. A lover of beauty, I cannot resign myself to publish this hideous picture, although it would no doubt give much amusement.

In those days I was not yet initiated into political plans and discussions, but I believe that weighty conversations took place between King Carol and his guest, conversations in which my husband was occasionally allowed to take part. Important schemes were no doubt hatched, and a friendly mutual understanding was reached, which Fate was destined

to destroy by events more mighty and tragic than man's brain could have foreseen.

The Crown Prince of Germany's visit to Bucarest in the spring of 1909 was a gayer business; it, so to say, sounded another key; it was less ponderous, more colourful and quite in keeping with the early, flowered season.

Tall and exceedingly slim, although not handsome, in his white Cuirassier uniform, polished top-boots and shining, eagle-crowned helmet, William was a goodly sight, and as he was out for gaining hearts, he was at once exceedingly popular. When on his best behaviour, his manners were perfect, and he had a charming way with the King, full of deference and attention, so that the old gentleman was much pleased with him, though he was always somewhat disconcerted by youth.

Young William had however a weakness, and this was his over-great appreciation of pretty ladies which kept his uniformed guardians in a constant state of anxiety. This anxiety was passed on to Uncle, and joining forces, William's every effort towards freedom and arranging things pleasantly for himself, was ingeniously frustrated by the elders.

To the great displeasure of the generals of his suite, he managed to get out of a visit he was to pay to Constantza in the hope of spending that day with me and my young lady friends. This pleasant little plan was, however, brought to naught by those in authority, annoyed at his refusal to inspect our sea-port, where an eager colony of Germans had been awaiting his coming with feverish excitement. Therefore, instead of being allowed to enjoy himself in the company most congenial to him, he was marshalled about from one dull institution to another and instead of drinking tea at Cotroceni as he had hoped to do, he finally had to take it with Aunt, who talked to him about his grand- and great-grandfather, declaring that she was in intimate communion with the Emperor Frederick's spirit.

Certain concessions were however made both to William's tastes and youth, and he was allowed to be amused, not perhaps as he would have liked, but strictly within the limits of court etiquette.

A huge garden party was arranged at Buftea, the country seat of the Stirbeys; dances in national costumes were performed on the grass,

and as there were young ladies galore the bright young prince was able to use his charm to his heart's content, both offering and receiving homage in a manner which betrayed perfect routine.

The garden party was a complete success, the weather was beautiful, there were many flowers, the trees were in earliest leaf. The old King and Queen graced the festivity with their presence. All in white, Auntie beamed down upon this debonair offspring of the Hohenzollerns with grandmotherly indulgence, offering him, between the dances, no end of excellent advice which he accepted with the gay good grace habitual to him when speaking to a lady, never matter what her age might be.

Uncle circled about amongst the guests, young and old, being amiable with that relentless thoroughness inherent in his sense of duty, whilst I found my private amusement in watching the silent competition between the young Bucarest beauties, who one and all had set out to capture the volatile heart of this charming prince, famous for his never-failing interest in the weaker sex.

CHAPTER XXV

MY CHILDREN

My children were the central interest of my life. Those of our race are passionate mothers and we cannot conceive of a world without children. All our work, efforts and ambition tend towards building them up according to our ideals, making them happy and preparing for them a fine future.

My nursery was the centre of my life, and as only my two eldest children were born in close succession, and there were longer pauses between the other four, I was able to prolong it indefinitely.

I always preferred the nursery to the schoolroom, which was already a step away from the "Golden Age," the beginning of toil and trouble, and I was not by nature a pedagogue; I was in fact always inclined to be too lenient, as I hated the feeling of any sort of tyranny or coercion, and had an insurmountable aversion from scolding. I hated being scolded, and still more did I hate having to scold. This had been a great hindrance to me all through life, especially as I instinctively realized that this aversion was in fact weakness; an inability to be disagreeable even to those who thoroughly deserved being rebuked.

But, alas, too small a dose of severity is as little conducive to good educational results as the contrary. But the extreme urge for liberty, which was the fundamental trait of my character, made me incapable of coercing others, even when severity would not only have been absolutely justified but even necessary. I confess that many of the failures, even the disasters of my life, can be brought back to this fundamental inability to scold or reprove.

With the coming of our fourth child and second son Nicolas, we left our first Sinaia home, the "Foişor"; a delightful little house styled "Châlet Suisse," tucked in amongst huge fir trees, right up against the forest.

I had much loved this first house of our own; it was an idyllic little habitation, although the years spent beneath its roof had not been all peace and happiness, but it was the sort of little dwelling any woman's heart could love; small, low balconies all along the front and doors opening straight out into the forest. Now it had become too small for our growing family, so Uncle arranged a much bigger house for us in which there was plenty of space; the "Pelişor," which I still inhabit to-day when in residence at Sinaia.

Nicolas was named after Tsar Nicolas II who was his godfather. His advent was joyfully received by the entire country and people. Ducky came to be with me before and after his birth.

Nicky became immediately popular with high and low. He had those qualities and, I may add, also those faults which made him irresistible and easily forgiven when he sinned.

He was exceedingly independent, and always funny. He never could be still for a second; he was for ever "up and doing." Although far from good or obedient, he had a way of getting people to do what he wanted. Wherever Nicky went, he went to rule and order about, not because he was imperious and aggressive, but because he was funny. His funniness was of the good-humoured, irresistible kind which amuses even the dullest. Even as a tiny tot, his repartees were so comic that, instead of receiving the scolding he deserved he roused instead fun and laughter. Comically sly, he always had his own way, breaking down every defence or restriction. Even the most recalcitrant ladies of the "palace" were his slaves, nor could Uncle hold out against Nicky; he became the undisputed favourite who carried all before him, obtaining concessions never granted to any of us. Uncle loved him and would take him for long walks, although somewhat bewildered by the vagaries of this impulsive child, but his spontaneous nonsense refreshed and amused the old gentleman more than anything else. Nicky became Uncle's "fun," he could hardly do without him for a day and there was a certain kingly smile reserved only for this sprite-like little fellow who had entirely stolen the King's heart.

"Der Nicolai ist wirklich ganz unglaublich," was his usual appreciation of the child: "Man kann ihn nie fassen."

And it was just that: Nicky had about him something fluid, not to be grasped, he was always escaping from, or getting out of, anything

which might curtail his liberty, hamper his movements, or put him into harness.

People set out with the firm intention of bringing the child to heel, only too soon to find themselves attending to his every desire, complying to his least reasonable demand and quite forgetting that their initial object had been to try and subjugate him.

Nicky was, in fact, irresistible. He was a bonny little fellow but had a too long nose for a child. His eyes were hard, blue and compelling, sometimes almost fierce, and for a time he was possessor of silver-fair curls as fine and glossy as spun glass. I have still one of these curls kept as a great treasure in a precious *Faberge* box. Even to-day it has a way of curling round my finger as though imbued with secret life.

Nicky was lithe, agile, for ever on the move, here, there and everywhere, illusive, a will-o'-the-wisp; a joy and a torment to those who loved him or had to keep him in order.

Carol, the eldest of our children, was quite different.

As a small boy he was plump, merry and docile. Being the first, he was of course spoilt by high and low, and all the good things of this world were cast at his feet. He was the long-hoped-for heir and therefore the great favourite.

He grew up steady, rather stolid, easy to manage, and had from all times an urge towards information. He learnt to read with astonishing rapidity. In his early years he was all sunshine and good-humour, later he became just a little pedantic; his sisters would declare "Carol likes tiresome things." The truth was that, even as a quite small boy, he was unusually interested in all things pertaining to rules, laws, proscriptions and interdictions, he liked to inquire into the inner working of things; this came probably from being a great deal with Uncle, whose speciality was to instruct. In Carol he found a fertile ground, as the boy also shared his father's and grand-uncle's passion for soldiering. He loved all things military and cared immensely for uniforms, regulations and every minutest detail of discipline and command.

At the age of three or four, he would march with a tiny sword at the head of the soldiers when the guard was changing, solemnly certain that he was in command, or he would stand in the middle of the band, beside the bandmaster, a little stick in hand, imitating with the utmost earnestness that important gentleman's every gesture.



"NICKY," WHEN TWO YEARS OLD
(PHOTOGRAPH BY BERESFORD)



"MIGNON" (PICTURE TAKEN BY PRINCESS NADÈJE STIRBEY)



CAROL AT TEN YEARS OF AGE



ILEANA, THREE YEARS OLD

Carol was adored by the officers and their men, and no end of wee uniforms were offered him by the different regiments. In these he would proudly strut about giving orders to imaginary troops, admirably imitating the voice used by those in command, sharply separating his sentences and rolling his "r's."

But this over-military little fellow was a trial to his sisters; the tyrant slumbered within him and as his games were modelled upon State institutions and military restrictions, he naturally hampered their fun.

He would for instance set up a custom-house in the middle of the corridor where his sisters were tearing about with their horses and toy-carts, he would insist upon taxes being paid, thereby curtailing their liberty and causing endless scenes of revolt and indignation.

It is interesting to watch children at their games, nothing is more character-revealing, and the qualities or faults lying dormant in each small being are almost uncannily brought to light.

Carol was all order and precision, with an underlying impulse to rule, subdue, restrict. Elisabetha, although strangely silent, was full of ardour, fantasy and imagination. She was fond of being alone; as a small child she could be very wild, then her eyes would glow, but she seldom expressed herself in words; her hands were small and strong as steel.

Exceedingly handsome even as a baby, her features were unexpectedly classical, although her face was as round as a cherub's. Her look was straight, almost defiant, beneath well-marked eyebrows. Carol's desire to subjugate her aroused furious though almost dumb resentment.

Mignon was all smiles and passivity, she was pleased with everything, she would docilely join in with the others' games, but without ever any desire to lead or dominate. Her nature was based upon sweetness and patience, not unmixed with indolence: she seemed born to be the *souffre-douleur* of all the others. She never complained or felt aggrieved and there was an almost sleepy and instinctively indulgent look in her long-shaped blue eyes. Her beautifully strong fair hair grew low on her forehead. This hair was a continual temptation to Nicky; he could not keep his fingers out of it and I remember once, when I was pitying Mignon for having caught her hair in the door-handle, how

she placidly answered, "Oh! it does not matter. Nicky hurts me much more when he tugs my hair out," and, alas, Nicky was very often "tugging" at his sister's hair!

There was almost a peasant's endurance about Mignon. One could have well imagined her in a cottage, the mainstay of the family; lighting the fire, milking the cows, fetching water at the well, or carrying too heavy babies about, sweeping the floors, setting the dishes on the table. Mignon was instinctively a helpful and domestic child.

Having been born at a period when I had been very unhappy, I loved her with the love a lion-mother might have for her cub. Mignon was, so to say, the child of my flesh, I could almost feel with my own body when Mignon had an ache or a pain.

If Mignon was the child of my flesh, Ileana was certainly the child of my soul.

She came in the year 1909, and I was no longer young, life had already to a certain degree disciplined me; I was a more conscious personality, my character had ripened, I had learnt self-control and how to look life and circumstances squarely in the face. My shoulders were thrown back and I was ready to take my own responsibilities.

Her birth was a great joy to me and I was glad she was a girl. Even at the hour of her birth her eyes were enormous and dark blue.

I remember how I lay on my back, the struggle over, the new little world wanderer pressed to my heart, listening to the royal salute, twenty-one guns for a princess; had it been a son there would have been a hundred and one. Perhaps some would be disappointed that it was not a boy, but I was not, and those guns were like the voice of my people rejoicing with me over the birth of this fifth child. Later there could still be a boy.

To-day I no longer resented being told that my children belonged to the country, to-day it was my pride that it should be so.

I had gone a long way since October, 1894, when my first child was born; then I was seventeen, to-day I was thirty-five, and had learnt something of patience and abnegation and had understood the necessity of constant effort towards a central goal, had understood also that "serving" was the real object of life. We all have to learn to serve, some of us do not learn it easily. I was amongst these, but to-day I



CAROL DIRECTING THE MILITARY BAND



UNCLE WITH CAROL (SNAPSHOT TAKEN BY MYSELF)



"NICKY" ON HORSEBACK

"MIGNON" ON HORSEBACK

(SNAPSHOTS TAKEN BY MYSELF)

was beginning to understand, and with this understanding, Uncle's personality became more comprehensible, more sympathetic. He was not infallible, he too could err, but he was wise in most things, above all, he was earnest and entirely convinced. He loved Roumania and although occasionally unnecessarily ponderous, he had a straight line of action from which he never deviated.

Ileana from her earliest infancy had an earnestness about her which the other four did not possess. Her large dark blue eyes looked at you with deep inquiry and the child seemed to understand your every emotion with almost uncanny lucidity.

Ileana was naturally well-behaved; Ileana, as is so seldom the case, was born with the law within her, it was never necessary to teach Ileana the difference between right and wrong; Ileana knew. But this did not make of her a prig, she was a gay, happy child, full of life and high spirits, and when Mircea appeared early in the year 1913, Ileana loved him with motherly ardour and Mircea adored Ileana more than anyone on this earth; more than his mother, more than his nurse.

Thus we were a very happy family before the War came to tear so many things up by the roots.

I have already related elsewhere that it was one of King Carol's theories that he, not we, was to choose those who were to educate and bring up our children. Later in life I understood many of Uncle's views, and what seemed to us unnecessary tyrannies, but even to-day, with the judgment of my ripe years, I consider that here he made a grievous mistake. It gave rise to endless trouble in the household and the final result was anything but satisfactory. This, however, is one of those inner griefs that it is unnecessary to enlarge upon, but much misfortune might have been avoided and much was brought into our lives, with far-reaching consequences which in a way changed the face of history for us.

I can only say that we were not allowed to bring up our two eldest children, and with this order of things elements and influences were brought into the household which were disastrous in more ways than one.

But nevertheless I have many happy memories of our family life;

some stand out quite particularly, visions of the past, drenched with sunshine, gay with the sound of children's voices and the pattering of small feet:

Cotroceni: outside in the garden the breakfast is spread under the trees. It is springtime or early summer, the birds are singing, flowers coming out one by one according to season, snowdrops, scillas, daffodils, narcissi, tulips, irises, lilacs, peonies, roses, lilies, delphiniums, and the children are running about, happy, care-free, full of exuberant life. A scent of acacia and later of lime-blossom saturates the warm air, there are bees everywhere and many-coloured butterflies. From afar the call of military bugles, many dissonances but so familiar as to become almost dear to the ear, a natural accompaniment to certain hours of the day; occasionally a band, and then the tramp of soldiers' feet marching towards their fields of exercise. In the distance dogs barking and the voices from a girls' school not far off, singing in chorus, but always, at all hours the barkings of dogs. And on the freshly raked gravel the excited stamping of my horse's hoofs, impatiently inviting me to be off. Children and dogs surrounded me, and nurses come running in starched white dresses. "Good-bye, Mamma!" "I'll soon be back, children!" and away I fly, the joy of life coursing like wine through my veins.

Sinaia: keen mountain air; firs, all that grows here, tree or flower, is strong, upright, vigorous, vividly coloured; every breath you draw goes deeply down into your lungs, it is like drinking a draught of icy clear water. Long walks, flower-filled meadows, the grass so high that the children are half hidden in it; blue-bells, buttercups, ranunculus, fox-gloves, wild gladioli, turk-cap, lilies and what not else. Sunshine, the smell of freshly cut hay, laughing voices and, in the background, high mountains and, scaling their rocky sides, sombre armies of giant firs.

Cavalcades: the children mounted upon sturdy mountain ponies with flowing manes and tails, I leading the way on fiery, iron-legged Air-ship. The ring of hurrying hoofs behind me; we are going at a great pace, taking sharp corners at perilous angles, but they are all shouting, laughing, gay and feverishly excited to follow me along these twisting, curving little paths, through the great forest, over wooden bridges, never quite certain of safely reaching the farther side, as occasionally

during the winter the beams of these bridges rot; but we are young, careless, count upon our luck, unafraid.

Then over the Prahova river, up the steep banks to the meadows beyond, wild gallops through the mountain flowers, the scent of feathered pinks, the sweetest of all scents, white-clad peasants beginning to cut away all this glory, and again laughter, laughter, and those children's voices so good to hear.

Back again through the forest and suddenly the pattering of rain on the leaves overhead, shouts of excitement, hurry, scurry, let's get home as quickly as possible so as not to be drenched!

Home: the sound of small feet running down the corridors, doors opening and shutting, more laughter, calls for Nana, for Nini, and leaning out of the window whilst I take off my wet things, I see the rain beating down my flowers in the garden beneath, but it was only a shower, the sun is breaking through the clouds again. . . .

Constantza: the sea . . . the harbour with its teeming life; ships, sailors, the screech of sirens, different signals, the piercing note of the whistle, agonized calls from the funnels of departing steamers, the reek of tar, of ropes, of seaweed; grimy men hauling heavy weights, the colours of flags tormented by the wind, the silver shine of sea-gulls' wings, the splashing of oars, the lapping of waves against the wharves, bustle, life, energy.

Again the pattering of children's feet; this time along the decks of the *Regele Carol*, of the *Trajan*; the faces of officers, the dry smile of Captain Periețeanu, small, nut-brown, a man of few words but the children's special friend, by them christened "Pikitani," as reliable and devoted as a trustworthy nurse.

The ship's doctor with his dark beard and all-seeing eyes, also one of the children's friends, bluejackets, stewards, mechanics, hurrying servants, everywhere pleasurable excitement, always something to see; the incomparable joy of life on board, a taste of brine on one's lips and floating over all the smell of kitchen, the eternal cooking of many meals for high and low, for big and small.

Mamais: huge stretches of sand, a beach so long that the end is lost in distance. Wee pink shells like rose-leaves cast away by fairies, bathing, that particular laugh reserved for the impact with cold water, the whispering swish of waves softly breaking on the shore, each in turn

leaving a snowy line of foam. Games in the sand, excited dogs tugging at heavy bits of wood cast up by the tide, or gone suddenly crazy, scampering like greyhounds, madly coursing over the beach, yelps of delight; nurses with bath towels, parasols and reproving words, and again laughter, laughter.

Slow boats moving over flat lakes, the sun pouring mercilessly down upon our heads, turning the water into a sheet of light which scorches our eyes. A small island; landing amongst high reeds, a shingly shore and then willow trees, welcome shade, but many mosquitoes, many birds' nests; underfoot the ground is grey with their dung: Ovid's Island, and in the middle an ancient water-wheel and strange birds disturbed by our invasion rising heavily into the air; there is something resentful about their flight. Instinctively we hush our voices, it is as though the poet's spirit were going with us through the silent groves. Overhead the wings of a giant dark brown eagle, his shadow moving slowly across this lonely place.

Back again over the lake, the sun setting in a colossal blaze, a conflagration of the skies, a *Götterdämmerung*, every possible and impossible tint of flaming rose, orange, amber, gold, with sudden unexpected streaks of burning violet; sky and water are on fire. Then gradually the glow dwindles, the colours begin to fade, become opalescent, mother-of-pearl, faintly yellow, dove-grey, turquoise-green, lavender-blue, and finally dusk stretches over everything a shadowy hand; there is no more colour anywhere and our returning feet drag slowly through heavy sand. . . .

Gallops on the long beach, wild stampedes, through the line of foam, snorting horses, dancing hoofs, shouts of laughter with an occasional note of alarm, wet tails whisking here and there, showers of spray drenching our clothes, and from the opposite direction, slowly coming towards us, rising like shadows upon the horizon, file upon file of peasants' carts driven by Turks, Tartars, Russians and sometimes Germans, each costumed according to race. All the Turks' faces are strangely alike, bearded, absolutely impassive, but friendly; their women unveil for a moment so as to have a good look at us, their eyes are bright with curiosity. The little Tartar girls have their hair tightly plaited in many little pigtails which stand out stiffly from their heads; these as well as their eyebrows and fingernails are dyed bright-red with

henna, their much-washed cotton trousers have deliciously faded tints, grey-blue, mauve, mignonette-green.

Fair-bearded, blue-eyed giants, the Russians wear scarlet blouses which the water reflects in long streaks of colour. Their handsome, blue-blooded horses neigh their welcome, snort, rear, plunge, heavily pressing against their collars, almost bursting their traces, eager to fraternize with our mounts. The carts are in danger of being overturned into the sea.

And again it is evening; the shadows become so long that it is as though our horses were walking on stilts; seagulls by the hundred, weirdly shrieking their desolate call, ghost birds with the voices of banshees, and all of a sudden the moon, a white crescent painted against the sky, sending a wavering line of silver down over the sea, her reflection much brighter than her own pale face. Voices have taken on a lower key, laughter is less shrill, a comfortable weariness envelops man and beast, the moth-greyness of dusk spreads a uniform cloak over colour and sound. No more light, but before us that thin, almost absurdly pale, crescent moon.

Tegernsee: Mamma's house above the lake. Reception in the small hall full of flowers. Mamma's beaming face, her inquiries, her interest, her pleasure to greet each child in turn, some have grown, some have changed; it is a year since last she saw them.

The taking possession of rooms lovingly prepared, everywhere flowers and the odour of a certain scent special to Mamma's house, also the smell of Russian cigarettes.

Mild scoldings, excellent meals, favourite dishes, welcoming smiles on the faces of old servants, luscious cakes, large spreads of bread and butter for tea. The garden full of white and mauve Japanese anemones and fire-colour dragon flowers, also many roses. Rain, too much rain which makes Mamma complain, and also excuse herself just a little as though it were her fault, as though she were responsible for the behaviour of the skies.

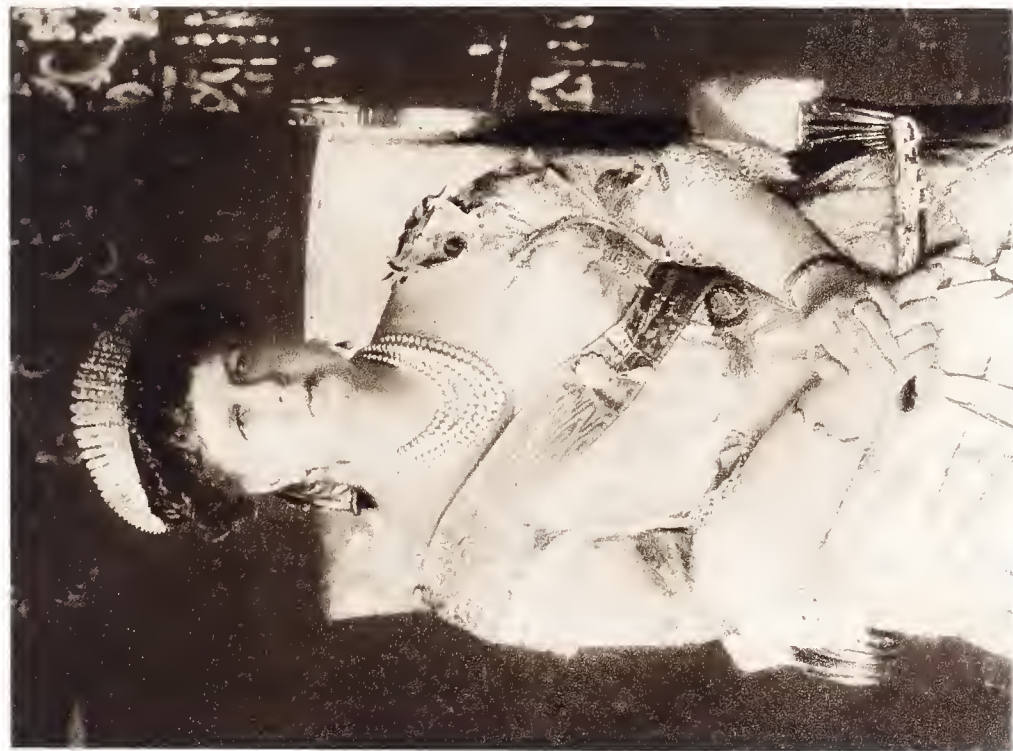
Long drives through emerald-green pastures, through picturesque villages, strong, healthy-looking peasants mowing their grass, a smell of hay but also, alas, of manure, large shiny cows grazing in damp fields—deep blue gentians growing in the swamps; heavy clouds, more rain.

Mamma tries to educate Nicky but finds him a handful, but Mamma is accustomed to giving orders, to being obeyed. The little fellow is dressed in a bright blue, Tyrolese cotton coat and leather shorts; on his fair curls he wears an absurd felt hat, rather the shape the clowns wear in a circus, and stuck at the back of it, a pheasant's feather almost as long as the child himself.

"Girls are really much nicer than boys," declares Mamma and gives up every effort at subduing this unruly grandson, who runs away to disturb the chauffeurs at their work. He even finds means of mixing water with the petrol, which causes disaster, but the culprit is not to be caught, he is as slippery as a fish in water. "He deserves a whipping," declares Mamma, but she hopes someone else will give the whipping. Sometimes she considers it wiser not to see all Nicky's tricks.

In the evening, games of cards if there are guests, otherwise reading round a table on which stands an enormous shaded lamp. The doors are open into the garden, the air outside is cool, a little damp; now and again a footstep crunches the tidy gravel outside, then Mamma looks up over her spectacles; a scared bat coming from outside circles distractedly round the room, instinctively the women raise their hands to cover their hair, then out it goes again into the night. Upstairs the children are asleep in their snug white beds, the stars reflect their faces in the quiet lake, now and again a soft gust of wind rustles the leaves of the great lime trees. Peace. I am far from politics, far from intrigue, strife. There is rest under Mamma's roof. . . .

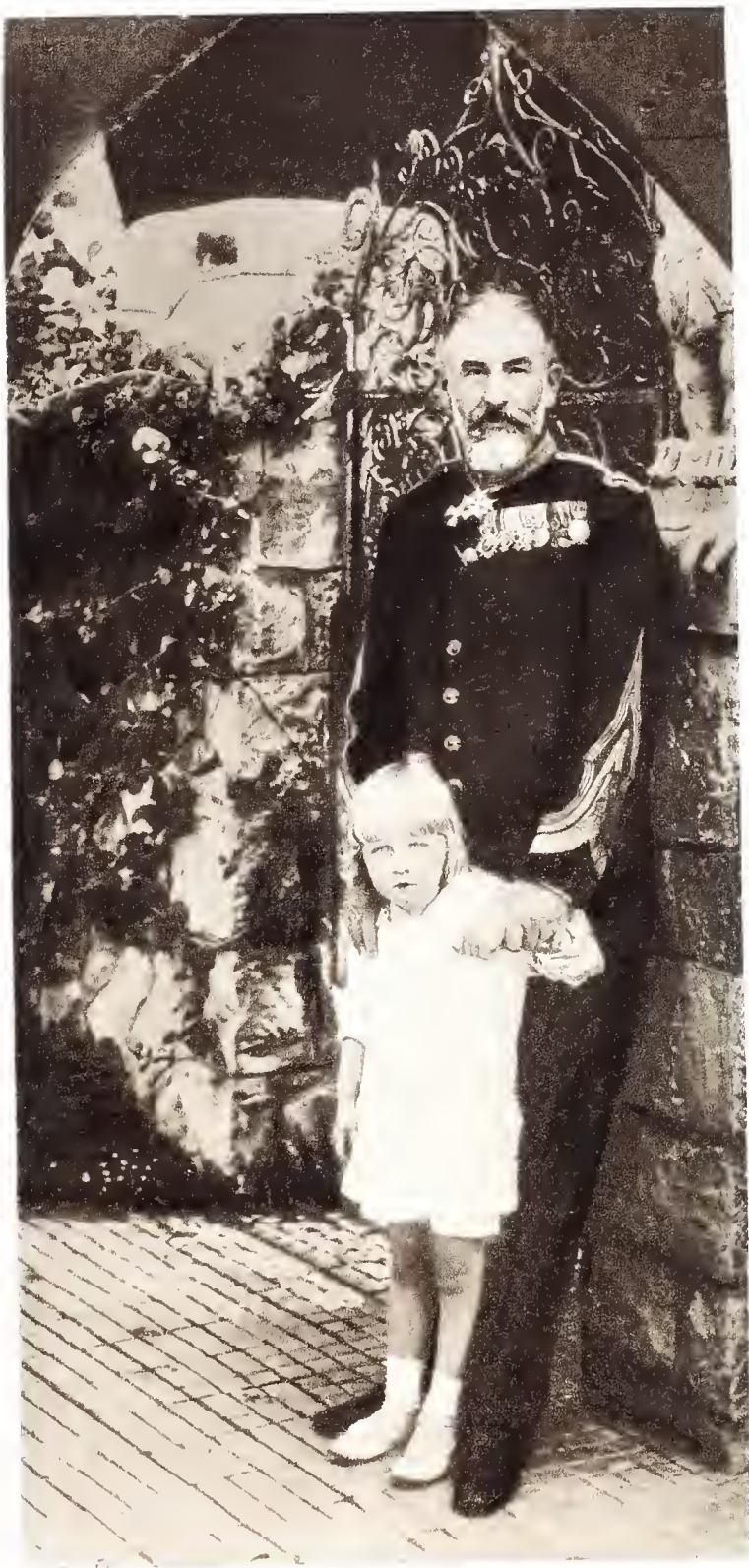
Munich: Elisabetha is trotting along beside me in a neat little costume of dark blue serge, her hair is very fair and catches the light, golden spangles seem to be caught in its meshes. We share a delightful feeling of excitement, we are going to look in at the shop windows: books, pictures, prints, china, glass, jade, and the Russian shop with its old icons, Ural stones, silver boxes and queer little odds and ends. The fur-shop; such lovely soft foxes and those deep brown sables and that tawny leopard-skin, and farther on that tempting display of scarves, veils, and enchanting coloured silks. Neither of us has a very bulging purse, so we carefully calculate what we dare spend, we must first look at everything from outside before we venture within the shops. Our feet have a special ring on the pavement, each single step seems to proclaim the words: holiday, holiday!



MY MAMMA



SISTER SANDRA



UNCLE WITH "NICKY"

Back to the hotel where Mamma is already at lunch; different cousins have arrived, an uncle, an aunt; the children cautiously look at each other, a year always makes a difference; it takes time before the first shyness wears off. Plans, projects, it is so delightful to feel the world and its joys lying open before us. . . .

Langenburg: a lovely mediæval castle belonging to the Hohenlohes; here sister Sandra is at home. A delightful old place with enormous walls and gardens planted in the former moats. A beautiful view over hill and valley, many forests and all around superbly picturesque old towns: Rotenburg, Dinkelsbuhl, Hall, Nördlingen and many another; wonderful drives and excursions.

A quiet family life—here the children have the lion's share and Mignon is the great favourite: she feels quite at home in the castle, where I leave her for weeks with her cousins; she knows every corner, every stone, she is friend with every servant, knows the people in the village and has a special pet name for Uncle Erny who reads to them in the evening many an amusing story.

Unfortunately the Langenburg food is too excellent, Mignon gains weight, but she is so happy, she loves everybody and everybody loves her.

A perforated stone gallery runs round the inner court, and below Nicky is circling round and round on a bicycle, he never seems to reach the point of exhaustion, and one wonders why? Here as everywhere he is irrepressibly full of effervescent life, and establishes for himself a special freedom no one dares curtail.

Sandra's rooms are full of treasures and souvenirs of our childhood, they have the cosiness of rooms much lived in, rooms peculiar to an intimate family life. The apartment I inhabit looks right over the tree-tops down towards the deep green valley below, through which a small stream flows. Here also it rains too often and Sandra bemoans the weather just as Mamma does; it becomes a personal offence.

The Langenburg teas are celebrated; never were nor shall there be cakes, tarts, *Bretzeln* biscuits, sandwiches or jams like in the Hohenlohe home; there is also beautiful old silver, there is a real hereditary feeling about it all, well established, comfortable, for some perhaps a little dull.

Thus do different pictures rise before me, memories of the happy

sides of family life, become all the more precious because we look back upon them, because our outstretched hands can grasp them no more; irretrievably they belong to the past. . . .

The invention of motors made a great difference in our lives. They contributed more than anything else to liberty and emancipation. Now no place was out of reach, and distances being abolished, all men became neighbours, which brought us into contact with many more people and made control and restrictions much more difficult.

The day was ours in a different way, for having become masters of space we could defy small prohibitions.

Quaintly enough Uncle was in no wise averse to this new form of transport; on the contrary, motors became one of the joys of his declining years. But being still under the influence of Cousin Charly who had to be wise upon every subject, she got him to believe that the N.A.G., which she patronized, were the only really good motors, which they were certainly not, anyhow in those days; and so it happened that he hardly ever reached his destination or only with the greatest difficulty, the N.A.G. being a heavy, bad-tempered machine, more addicted to *pannes* than any motor I have ever known.

This however did not daunt King Carol. He loved this new possibility of covering distances, and if his motor stopped at every hill and his ruthless German chauffeur pitched him off his seat round every corner, he simply imagined that it was thus that all motors and chauffeurs behaved and would not listen to voices timidly trying to explain that there *were* motors which climbed steep hills and chauffeurs who took corners at angles less detrimental to comfort; but Charly, the beloved, had recommended both motor and chauffeur, therefore they must be best. As the dear old gentleman never sat in any other machine but his own, he went, alas, to his grave without having known motor-ing under really pleasant conditions. But even thus he was jubilant over this new possibility of rediscovering his country in his old age.

Aunty was just as enthusiastic as Uncle and invested in caps more practical than becoming. She was all smiles and splendid white teeth under a peaked creation which made her uncomfortably resemble an old botanical professor out on a Sunday excursion. But we loved Aunty in these caps, not because they were becoming, which they cer-

tainly were not, but because we realized that in a way they had become the symbol of a never dreamed of emancipation, achieved by rolling over high roads which, because of health and circumstances, she had, during a long life of abnegation, never been able to explore.

Both Uncle and Auntie delighted in taking our children for long drives towards evening and we used to lend them in turn, and it was really touching to observe the way their young company heightened for the old couple the pleasure of these excursions.

They especially liked going with the children to the different monasteries situated in the vicinity of Bucarest, such as Tigănești, Căldărușani, Snagov, Cernica and Paserea. These distant communities established in lovely spots, far from the turmoil of the world, looked upon these royal visits as benedictions and now still mention with emotion the memorable dates when the venerable sovereigns came into their midst, bringing with them the younger generation.

Little by little better harmony had been attained. Age and ill-health had much mellowed the man of iron; he loved our children and through them more gentleness was shown to the parents, more indulgence, and we on our side had more understanding; and with it came a feeling of deep admiration for these worthy forerunners whose lives had been entirely given up to their people in an unselfish desire to serve as well as to lead. I am glad to be able to say that these last years were almost happy, years when a mutual good understanding pervaded our family life.

CHAPTER XXVI

SOME FAMILY MATTERS

IN the spring of 1907 the country was shaken out of its happy self-complacency by serious peasant revolts. A Conservative Government under Georges Cantacuzène was in power. This government did not realize the seriousness of what was happening and the movement which had begun in Moldavia spread rapidly and in a few days the whole of Oltenia was up in arms. The peasants clamoured for the division of the great properties and for the better payment of field-labour.

The Liberals, always on the watch, were all too ready to step into the Conservatives' shoes when on March the 10th Georges Cantacuzène handed in his resignation, and on March the 15th a Liberal Government was called in by King Carol under Demetre Sturdza, with General Averescu as Minister of War, and it fell to General Averescu's share to suppress the revolts with armed force.

The final result was that new laws were established to protect the peasants and a certain amount of ground was divided up amongst the villagers, more especially for pasture. Also the so-called "Casa Rurală" was created which helped impecunious peasants to buy ground up to five hectares.

Order had been re-established but certain lessons, never again to be so easily forgotten, had been learnt. The fundamental reforms, however, comprising the radical division of the great properties, were only brought about in the reign of King Ferdinand and will be spoken of in the right place.

I have more than one reason for remembering that spring of 1907, when my eyes were opened to several truths and when I began to go more deeply into the interests of my country. Much that I had not understood, or had overlooked through ignorance or lack of perception, became comprehensible to me; my horizons widened, I came together with more interesting people; now I had really definitely grown up.

No doubt I had ripened slowly, but this is in keeping with those of my race, and has the advantage that we hold to our ideals longer and with them to a reserve of strength for the days of adversity. Our souls keep young.

Changes were taking place in my life, I was slowly advancing towards the heart of things.

The days of acute loneliness were over. I was no more a stranger in a strange land; many friends and acquaintances were now grouped around us. I had, so to say, found my footing; also my interest had awakened and to-day when uncle and nephew discussed politics, or military questions, my ears were no longer closed by indifference, and by degrees I began to see the importance of their conversations and to become keenly interested in all that was vital to the country: agriculture, industry, army, internal and foreign politics, the desire for expansion. . . .

One of the chief topics of conversation which came up again and again was about the way our Roumanians beyond the frontiers were being oppressed by the Hungarians, Uncle complaining of how he was continually calling Vienna's attention to the fact that this attitude of the Magyars was severely trying his loyalty towards the Triple Alliance because of Roumania's growing bitterness against her neighbours.

But I did not then entirely understand how exceedingly important this was for the future trend of our politics.

The death of my father-in-law in 1905 was a great grief to the whole family, but more especially to his wife and to King Carol whose chief confidant he had been ever since he had left home to rule over a distant country. King Carol was without doubt the stronger character of the two, but Fürst Leopold, with his extreme tact and perfect erudition on every subject, was often able to be a good counsellor. Living in the centre of Europe he could more easily keep in contact with all manner of people and with most of the German and also foreign courts with which Uncle was no more closely in touch. He was therefore Uncle's chief source of information from abroad. Loyal, dependable, devoted, a man of perfect honour, no one was better fitted for this rôle of mediator; he was continually smoothing out difficulties and misunderstandings and explaining away offences.

My father-in-law was a born peacemaker and because of this rare and lovable quality may his memory be for ever blessed. Sigmaringen after the death of Fürst Leopold could never again be the same, he had been the soul and spirit of the place.

Uncle had also great affection for his younger brother Friedrich, but there was little affinity of character or taste. "Onkelchen" was all phlegmatic good-humour, fond of his ease, left well alone and was not in the least preoccupied with politics and world problems. He loved a comfortable life, as private and uncomplicated as possible. He considered that "the great man of the family," as he smilingly dubbed his brother, made mountains out of mole-hills, unduly exaggerating the proportion of events, thereby creating difficulties which would never have existed had he only deigned to ignore them.

"He takes himself and his country and everything he does or leaves undone, all he says and thinks, much too seriously; he is altogether too important for every-day comfort," said "Onkelchen," and then he would smile his slow, captivating smile.

"Täntchen," his thin, active, talkative little wife, was more militant and showed scant patience with either Uncle or Aunt. Both her elderly sisters-in-law exasperated her, Fürstin Antonia as well as Carmen Sylva; I am afraid that she even occasionally called them "hum-bugs" and was not disinclined to be in sympathy with the younger generation when they allowed themselves to criticize their betters. "Täntchen" was very self-opinionated but not a pedagogue; she laughed with the young.

A visit paid by this comfort-loving couple to Uncle and Aunt at Bucarest in the early summer of 1909 was not entirely a success. The guests found the over-sober life with the earnest sovereigns little conducive to pleasure, and Uncle and Aunt had the feeling that neither they, their work, nor their country were being properly appreciated.

"Täntchen" was fond of giving good advice and Aunt, convinced of her own superiority over her much younger sister-in-law, resented being taken in hand by "Täntchen," who kept explaining how much more comfortable they would all be if they did this, that and the next thing in her way instead of theirs. "Onkelchen's" chief annoyance was the secret police (not secret at all) who dogged his every step during the long walks he and his energetic little wife were in the habit of taking, al-

though they did not consider Bucarest a particularly pleasant walking-ground.

"Täntchen" loved having chatty, easy-going people to talk to, people whose agreeable conversation dug down into no depths; she liked to laugh, to be gay and amused, so Aunty's musical entertainments, so tense with vibrant effusiveness, were little to her taste. She was always trying to escape to Cotroceni where I was made the confidante of her exasperation.

But the exasperation was not hers alone, for when I came to Aunty I had to hear the other side of the question, and listening to both parties I understood that there are certain elements that cannot mix harmoniously in spite of perfect manners and goodwill on both sides.

Aunty and "Täntchen" could never be attuned one to the other. There was perhaps a certain humour in all this for the onlooker, but I think that when the hour of parting sounded at last, the guests left with an undeniable feeling of relief.

Life has a cruel way of separating even those born under the same roof.

Towards the end of his life King Carol was often ailing; he was, I believe, suffering from an acute and complicated liver complaint which often caused him great pain but seldom kept him in bed. He had gradually become exceedingly emaciated and had to be severely dieted, which made him very weak.

He bore his state of health with the stoicism which characterized him in all things, but there were periods when he felt so ill that duty became an arduous effort, and it was natural that he then preferred having to do with those who met him half-way and took account of his years.

It therefore came about quite naturally that he took pleasure in working with Bratianu; the eagerness of the younger man to please his sovereign was a relief after arduous arguments with old Sturdza, who was a tough debater.

I remember how once he said to me: "You'll see, my child, when one gets old it is a fatigue to work with brains too anchored in fixed prejudices and formulas. One's own brain is tired, so that continual arguments and debates are a fatigue. To-day it is a rest to me to work

with Bratianu, he is receptive, he follows up my ideas, quickly understands my desires and is not in eternal opposition. He is eager to please me, also eager to learn, for him I am a 'sage,' whilst my old friend Sturdza is so obstinate, and we tire each other."

And thus did Ion Bratianu's star begin to rise. Uncle recognized his outstanding intelligence, and his masterly character undeniably indicated him as Sturdza's successor.

In 1908 Demetre Sturdza's health gave way and he resigned his position as leader of the Liberals, withdrawing from public life, and Bratianu became Prime Minister, though it was only in the following year that he was elected chief of the Liberal party. Sturdza lived for several years and died in October, 1914, almost the same date as his old master.

Another sign that Uncle was turning towards the young was that when the head of his household, his trusted friend of many years, Ion Kalinderu, died in 1913, he put Barbo Stirbey in his place, declaring that he must look ahead and plan for those who were to come after him. His successors must find a trustworthy man at their side whose antecedents would in every way justify the choice he was making; a man of their own age indicated to advance into the future with them.

According to King Carol, Barbo Stirbey was admirably fitted for this position. Of a somewhat shy and retiring disposition, Barbo Stirbey had always preferred a family life to a public one, but he was a man of quiet and practical common sense and one who kept his own counsel. Modest, but at the same time somewhat haughty and of few words, he was not perhaps cut out for wider popularity, but those who really knew him had a high opinion of his character and intelligence. Married to a charming and distinguished aristocrat, Nadèje Bibescu, he had four daughters and lived at Buftea, his country seat not far from Bucarest, where I often went to ride in their woods. Prince Stirbey's grandfather had once sat on the Roumanian throne and had been one of those who had voted for the coming of King Carol; Uncle considered that, in every way, Barbo Stirbey was the man indicated to become Ion Kalinderu's successor.

Thus when our time came we found these two men, Ion Bratianu and Barbo Stirbey, at our side. Auntie never cared for Bratianu, but had for years been very fond of Nadèje and Barbo Stirbey.

Aunty nursed Uncle with unceasing devotion. Her own health, always precarious, made this continual care of an ailing husband very difficult; besides, their temperaments were so different that their long association had not been without storm and drama. Both had suffered in their own way, but gradually with the years patience and understanding had come to them and at the end of their lives, the old king and queen were certainly a very united and touching couple.

Aunty liked to play her part of sister of charity and continually told us about all she did for the King. She was one of those people who took an almost morbid interest in everything pertaining to health, doctors and medicine. She was for ever proclaiming the merit of new diets, new cures, new treatments, new remedies, but for all that she was an excellent nurse, and her patience beside a sick-bed was endless.

Besides the specialists called in from time to time for consultation, there was, of course, a court doctor, who had grown grey with the years. He was a military gentleman of much wisdom; he was also Aunty's personal friend and a good musician, but like Sturdza he was getting old, and at times Uncle had an instinctive craving for younger and more virile aid. At courts, however, doctors, like all else, are fixtures; there is much jealousy and people cling to their posts, and it was only owing to an unfortunate accident which invalidated the old doctor that a young man was called in; Dr. Mamulea.

Dr. Mamulea, who was head of the Sinaia hospital when he came into our lives, came to stay and was with King Carol to the very end. Aunty accepted him with open arms; he became her great confidant and in many ways also, her solace.

We were relieved to see her turn towards so trustworthy a man; we knew that Dr. Mamulea would never give anything but steady, well-considered advice.

This new court favourite was a blue-eyed Roumanian of the staunch, unemotional type, a man who could keep his own counsel as well as hold his tongue; a man who unaggressively stuck to his own opinion without being swayed by changing winds. Quiet, reliable, phlegmatic and entirely incorruptible, a man who went about his own business without any fuss, he was a great comfort to the King, and was also with my husband to his last day.

Much of the peace and harmony which characterized the last years

of the old sovereign can be ascribed to Dr. Mamulea's calming influence. He understood how to interest Aunty and how to feed her eager brain upon healthy principles, restraining her too irrational impulses and leading her gradually towards a soberer conception of people and events.

About this time she was enthusiastically propounding a tremendous and complicated scheme for helping the blind. She had elaborated fantastic plans for a marvellous white city where all the blind of the world were to be gathered together with their families (as it was cruel to isolate them) and in which they were to live in arcadian harmony, loving each other, listening to beautiful music whilst working at different crafts.

Aunty's dreams were large and generous and when she expounded them in glowing language, those hanging on her every word for the moment really saw visions of harmony and goodwill rising up before them and you could almost follow her through the streets of this white city her fantasy had created; but the more cynical sneered, wondering *quel borgne sérail roi* in this congregation of acquiescent sufferers.

Aunty got into inextricable difficulties over her projects for the blind. Profiting by her enthusiasm, impostors worked upon her credulity and ran her into debt. Uncle had to come to the rescue, which he did with a none too light hand, inflicting many a humiliation upon his queen whose only fault had been to see things in unreal proportions and to place trust in people who abused her ingenuousness.

It was greatly owing to Dr. Mamulea's influence that Carmen Sylva relinquished certain activities no longer in keeping with her years, and which mostly led her to cruel deceptions and to humiliating reprimands on the part of the King.

Aunty instituted many good works, was a wonderful initiator and the most generous and altruistic woman I ever met; she lived for doing good. But she saw things on too large a scale, her plans and conceptions did not fit in with reality; her vast projects needed keeping in bounds and in the hands of unscrupulous flatterers she was lost. Constantly this meant trouble with Uncle. It was indeed distressing to see Aunty so often chastised for having been over-charitable.

Very characteristic of old King Carol's ideas of recreation were

our excursions on the Danube. These were carefully planned with the idea of giving us all a restful holiday.

For several years in succession, in late spring or early summer, we would set out on our Danube yacht, the *Stefancel-Mare*; Uncle and Aunt, my husband and myself, the elder children, ladies-in-waiting, military followers, an occasional guest and *of course* a Minister or two, for these in Roumania are unavoidable appendages when a sovereign moves about his country or undertakes anything out of the ordinary.

When King Carol undertook either an excursion or a journey through his lands, even when recreation was the pretext, it was never for pleasure, but always for duty, and as he moved very rarely, these occasions had to be exploited to the utmost. The Danube trips were no exception to the rule.

We would steam slowly down the great stream and at every place, big or small, enormous, crowded, noisy, enthusiastic receptions would await us.

Those in rural surroundings were delightfully colourful and picturesque, but those in larger centres were often trying, because of the heat, crush and deafening din, everybody rushing in upon us at once.

Now and then we were allowed a day of quiet, when we either steamed slowly past miles of grey willows, alive with nightingales singing their songs of love, or quitted our yacht to embark upon steam-launches or in rowing-boats, for excursions into the swamps, lakes and canals of the Delta, enchanted regions, unlike anything ever seen; dream-landscapes, all peace and quiet, solitary water-worlds full of birds of every description; wild swan, pelican, heron, osprey, egret, cormorant, duck, eagle and innumerable smaller birds of prey.

These were red-letter days, when festive attire could be exchanged for country clothes and when at last we were allowed the illusion of pleasure instead of inflexible royal duty.

Of course the Ministers moved with us, frock-coats and all, but on these occasions were divested of some of their importance, becoming less solemn and political amongst birds, fish and water-lilies.

I delighted in these lonely regions, different from anything else and imbued with the poetry of the wilds. Narrow canals beneath the shade of swamped willow forests, each tree like a prehistoric monster with its gnarled and twisted trunk; vast lakes dotted here and there by

islands where royal eagles with rusty plumage throned upon gaunt trees, whose branches painted intricate designs against the cloudless sky, islands which in winter became the refuge of many wolves. Everywhere water-lilies like enormous stars, opening wide their snowy petals, inviting the sun to quicken their wealth of golden stamens. Endless armies of reeds bending like well-trained courtiers as the wash of our launch swept over their feet, then slowly raising their heads to stare after us, once more stiffly upright, but grieved because so soon abandoned again to their eternal solitude. There was something peculiarly stately about these tall reeds making obeisance to the royal launch and I kept watching them; there was such strange grace about their sweeping salute.

Our dearest companion on these Danube trips was Dr. Antipa, for years head of the State fisheries. He was a man unusually short of stature, round, jovial and full of wisdom. Educated in Germany, he spoke German as fluently as his own language and there was nothing that he did not know about water, fishes and birds. Antipa was everybody's friend and a trip on the Danube without Antipa lost half its charm.

The children loved him, and as he was so small, they had a peculiarly comradely feeling towards him, for the number of his inches brought him very near to their hearts; besides, he knew everything and was always ready to impart his knowledge in amusing and interesting anecdotes. Dr. Antipa was also a lifelong friend of my husband.

Although the crowded official receptions fatigued Aunty to the verge of exhaustion, no one loved these Danube trips more than she did. At the end of the day she would sink into her deck-chair and gather her ladies around her to rave about the charms of the great river.

She had amongst her ladies-in-waiting, one whom we all loved, Zoe Brangescu, a kind sweet soul, who better than anyone else seconded Aunty in all her good works, as did Marie Poener who faithfully served her for many a year.

The culminating phase of excitement was reached when from afar the visions of the beautiful Cernavoda bridge would appear painted against the horizon, looming larger and larger as the yacht approached and finally steamed under its vast arches.

Aunty would then sing veritable hymns of praise, for this mighty

bridge had been one of the big achievements of King Carol's reign, a dream he had steadily worked towards during his early struggle-filled years; for with this bridge over the Danube he connected the Dobrogea and the Black Sea with the rest of the country and also with Western Europe, thereby drawing much traffic and commerce down towards Roumania and her only sea-port, Constantza.

Always a slave to duty, Aunty considered herself morally obliged to wave continually to her subjects come down to the river's edge to see us pass. Declaring that a handkerchief was not conspicuous enough she would use a napkin, which she would endlessly flutter about like a white flag. Being cruelly short-sighted she would often continue waving this friendly signal even to the peaceful cows and sheep grazing on the river's banks, greatly to the children's amusement.

I loved best those evening hours when after the din and crush of noisy receptions peace gradually descended upon our world; when hands rested idly and voices were instinctively hushed. The willows became shadows and the sinking sun dyed the water a thousand changing tints for which the palette has no names. Timidly the stars appeared in a sky turned indigo-blue, and the songs of the nightingales would throb through the silence with sobbing liquid notes; quiet hours of beauty when each man becomes as an island and keeps his thoughts to himself.

Another picture of old Aunty rises up before me. My pen is always loath to leave her: she was so many-sided, in many ways so big in spite of those small idiosyncrasies which, when you have a sense of humour, could not help making you smile. She was both splendid and absurd!

I love her memory more than I ever loved her in real life when others, for all their honeyed words, too often encouraged her to behave unlovingly towards me. But now no one can rise up between us to cast a shadow, and as one remembers sunshine rather than rain, I remember her good qualities rather than her faults.

Carmen Sylva, the poet-queen: I see her standing on the iron-bound terrace of a house built for her on a pier overlooking the entrance to Constantza's harbour; a queer little house, erected by the engineers of the port, with rooms resembling the cabins of a ship. There she stood in her long white gown, her grey hair loosened to the fury of the wind.

Carmen Sylva had always loved the sea in a romantic sort of way, and was one of the few people who really enjoyed the wind. It filled her ever-tempestuous heart with exultation and stirred within her the sources of poetical imagination.

Though they lived uneasily together, royal protocol, strengthened by habit and a mutual sense of duty, had brought about that Uncle and Aunty hardly ever separated, even for a week. But towards the end of her life, the heat of Bucarest before the yearly departure for Sinaia became more than even Aunty's love of self-sacrifice could endure, so she was allowed a few weeks by herself, near the sea, which Uncle always disliked as much as she adored it. Here, accompanied by a favourite lady-in-waiting, a gentleman and her devoted old maid, she would arrange her life according to her taste, enjoying an independence seldom allowed her.

Aunty never liked sleeping all through the night and rose at hours when no one else was astir. Thus was she ever awake to see the ships arrive or depart, by day or by night. Like a ghost, all clad in white, she haunted the terraces of her wave-bound abode, a figure become dear to those who watched beneath the stars. Here also her napkin was ever on the flutter, but she also used a megaphone through which she would call messages to the departing ships, blessing their way in those many words which came so easily to her tongue.

Constantza loved old Queen Elisabeth, the most sociable of sovereigns, also the most original. She would gather around her many of its citizens, indifferent to their social standing, and, lying in her long chair, tatting in hand, she would entertain them endlessly with a flow of never-ceasing conversation, herself falling under the spell of her own voice.

I once spent ten days with Aunty in her queer little house, which I was to inherit later on. At night I left my door wide open with the hope of awakening when she rose to see the ships sail away. Often my healthy sleep would make me miss the right hours, but occasionally she would come herself to rouse me, and then standing at her side, I would wave the napkin, whilst through the megaphone she called out her messages to the departing ships.

The wind would make sport of Aunty's white hair and draperies and the wings of the sea-gulls circling over our heads had some of the same



GRAND DUKE KIRILL IN 1899



CARMEN SYLVA ON OVID'S ISLAND
(SNAPSHOT TAKEN BY MYSELF)



MY LITTLE MIRCEA

whiteness. Their weird cries were like the echoes of distressed voices answering the Queen's farewell wishes.

Later, when the queer little house on the pier became mine, it often seemed to me as though Auntie were still standing in spirit beside me, a tall figure with fluttering white gown, the megaphone held to her lips, calling out words of blessing to the ships noiselessly stealing out of the harbour, giant shadows pricked with light. . . .

In Roumania as elsewhere great excitement was caused by the first appearance of aeroplanes.

I remember a large festive meeting on the Bucarest race-course to see Blériot rise into the air. All Bucarest rushed to witness this sensational sight and the Royal Family went in great state headed by Uncle and Auntie, including, of course, the children, who were greatly thrilled.

It can well be imagined how this marvellous victory of man over air excited Auntie's imagination. She found every sort of poetical name for the "bird-man" who had mastered space in a way which up to the present had only belonged to the realm of dreams. She overwhelmed him with a flood of picturesque language whilst the crowd pressed around us to hear what she had to say.

Solidly planted on his thick-soled boots, Uncle stood beside her listening to her effusions, not quite certain if he entirely approved of this modern machinery, very sceptical as to its practical value. Uncle was not specially fond of innovations, but he too, in more sober language, found laudatory things to say to the hero of the day.

About the same time a Roumanian, Vlaicu, invented an aeroplane in which he made a few successful flights. But like so many others his career was brought to an untimely end, his machine coming to grief on the plains between Ploëști and Câmpina, and Vlaicu was killed. His name, however, remains amongst those of our national pioneers.

Thinking of the Blériot meeting on the Bucarest race-course I especially see two figures standing beside us, William of Wied, Auntie's nephew, and his wife, Sophie, who had been Princess Schönberg.

Sophie was one of Auntie's great favourites. Her grandmother had been a Roumanian through whom the Schönbergs had inherited a fine property, Fântânele near Băcau. Sophie had spent much of her child-

hood at Fântânele and adored all that was Roumanian. Her parents had died when she was quite young and Auntie had taken the orphan girl under her special care.

Sophie was clever, talented and a great music-lover. Auntie considered her exceptional in every way and loved her with that complete absorption of which she was capable, submerging her with her praise, with the belief in her marvellous capacities and desiring above all things to bind this ardently-loved girl more closely to her by ties of blood.

Pursuing this goal with that relentless persistence she put into all her desires, Carmen Sylva finally brought about a match with her nephew William of Wied, her brother's second son.

William was a fine, healthy, kindly fellow, with a soft voice and a wide smile, but not having the artistic temperament he was occasionally somewhat bewildered by the atmosphere into which he was being drawn, or so it seemed to me, the uninitiated onlooker. But William married Sophie, and Auntie, overjoyed, sent prayers of thanksgiving up to the heavens.

Now Sophie was her niece and could occupy a special position at the Roumanian court. Auntie could not bear Sophie out of her sight; they sang, painted, composed, wrote poetry, played the harp and piano together. I think they also spoke with spirits beyond the confines of our world, but this I never witnessed; anyhow, one thing was certain, no one any longer played any part with Auntie except, Sophie, Sophie, only Sophie.

But to paint, sing and play the piano was not enough. Auntie had greater ambitions for her chosen favourite and nothing less than a throne would suffice her for this exceptional being.

Getting Uncle to uphold her idea, the Albanian plan ripened and took form, and during a visit of the Prince and Princess of Wied at Sinaia in September, 1913, Take Ionescu brought the consent of Vienna, Rome and Paris to the choice of William of Wied for the Albanian throne.

I heard much about this great adventure, as Auntie had thrown herself heart and soul into it and little else was talked of during that autumn season. Sophie was full of excited anticipation, but it seemed to me as though quiet William was a little less enthusiastic, not being

so deeply moved by the romantic possibilities of this new career.

In October, however, the young couple started off for their hazardous adventure accompanied by Aunt's blessings and her passionate wishes for success. They went bravely to encounter tragic days, which ended by their losing their every possession, even the harp so dear to Sophie's heart.

The story is thrilling but too long to relate, but I shared with Aunt the intensely interesting letters Sophie regularly wrote from Durazzo. She indeed put up a brave fight and I approved of the intensity with which she espoused such a difficult cause. Her spirit was uncrushable, she showed a fine courage I truly admired, but the odds were too great, intrigue too rampant, passions ran too high; besides, the World War came to put an end to many hopes, Sophie's amongst others.

Sophie has kept her love for Albania and the Albanians: the romance of that wild country sank into her soul and still lives there; the flame of her enthusiasm has not burnt out, although Aunt is no more there to uphold her with her fiery belief. In fact, Aunt and her beloved Sophie never met again in this world. . . .

Before the birth of my last and sixth child, Mircea, I was not in my usual good health, and during the autumn visit to my mother in 1912 I had even to submit to being looked after, a fact which filled me with astonished resentment.

In January, 1913, Mircea was born, but I did not recover as rapidly as usual, being confined to my bed for three weary months by a painful phlebitis.

Ill-health seemed to me a personal insult, something that could happen to others, but not to myself. Outwardly I submitted with patience, but inwardly I was unresigned to the indignity of the sick-bed.

Because of this unfortunate mishap, I could not enjoy my last-born as I had enjoyed all the other children, being prostrate on my back, but it was a great comfort to me that Carol, who adored babies, would carry his little brother up and down my room as long as I wished, so that I could at least look at my baby to whom my whole heart went out. I always particularly adored my babies when they were tiny and helpless, they seemed to possess every drop of my blood.

During this time of trial, the friendship of a charming English-

woman, Leila Hamilton, was the greatest comfort to me. She came to me daily, helping me through those dreary winter months.

Her husband was interested in Roumanian oil; he was a Scotsman with a streak of mysticism in his make-up which I thought attractive. Leila, his wife, had a sweet young face framed in hair gone grey before its time. She was highly cultured and her voice was soft and soothing.

In the summer, the Hamiltons lived at Cămpina (the oil centre) where she had arranged a dear little house with nothing but Roumanian things, but in spite of this it had become quite an English dwelling with that unique cosiness and taste inherent in English homes.

There was great affinity of feeling between Leila and me; she would read to me by the hour and we would discuss every subject under the sun. In Leila Hamilton all was harmony, and she was just the sort of person pleasant to have beside a sick-bed.

Uncle came as often as he could escape from his work. He would generally appear towards evening and, sitting beside my bed, he would tell me all about his political difficulties. It was strange how confidential he had become, all distance seemed to be effaced between us, and to-day his conversation did not bore me as in former days.

This was during the first Balkan War, and some of our politicians, headed by Take Ionescu as chief leader, were clamouring to enter in with the Greeks, Serbians and Bulgarians who were fighting the Turks.

I was possessed with a desperate anxiety that we should be forced into war whilst I was tied to my bed. The thought that our soldiers might go off to fight whilst I was invalided was torture to me. But Dr. Romalo, our family doctor, a caustic, hard-tongued little man, very devoted but very bitter of speech, so as to impress upon me the necessity of keeping absolutely still, had pronounced some rather terrible words. "Remember," he said, "to-day you have a pistol in your leg and if you make the slightest movement you can shoot it off into your heart. . . ." So I kept still!

King Carol, through careful policy, warded off war and in March I was sent for a cure to Dax, where I had to learn to walk again. It was an exceedingly painful proceeding, but with tremendous energy I did all that was necessary to recover my health.

When the cure was over, although hardly up to the effort, I paid a

flying visit to Spain to see the King and Queen at Madrid and also my youngest sister then living there with her husband, the Infante Alfonso of Orléans-Bourbon.

It had always been my dearest wish to visit Spain, and Dax being quite near the Spanish frontier, the temptation could not be resisted, and although I received no official permission from home, I took the law into my own hands and took advantage of the unique chance which would probably never again come my way.

Unfortunately I was still far from well and during the long time I was laid up I had put on much weight, which made me very unhappy. I was still lame and had to walk about with a stick, besides, because of having been in bed for months, the soles of my feet had become very tender. All sightseeing was an excruciating fatigue, but with almost heroic tenacity I insisted upon visiting Toledo, Seville and Granada as well as different places near Madrid, such as the Escorial and Aranjuez. When a child my mother had shown me views of Granada and ever since it had been my dearest wish to see the Alhambra, and certainly I was not disappointed.

Rising out of the deep, those ochre-tinted fortress walls, austere and forbidding, guarding within their heart, as a rough stone guards its crystals, that treasure of delicate architecture. All those gardens, those fairy-like courts, all that running water, those quiet pools, those flowers and cypress trees, and everywhere the scent of orange blossom and the songs of nightingales. As background snow-capped mountains, a vision of beauty indeed.

The young queen was my first cousin and we were glad to be together and a pleasanter companion than King Alfonso could not be imagined—young, impetuous, so full of bubbling life. With pride he showed me the wonderful armoury housed in an annexe of the palace, and also his splendid stables so full of every kind of horses, exactly as described to us long ago, when we were children, in a letter from our dear Captain Maurice Bourke.

I fell in love with Spain and vowed I would return, which I did sixteen years later! I even had the courage to go to a bullfight, which I cannot say I enjoyed, though the first entry of the bull, so full of belligerent vitality, so grandly sure of his strength, when with head held high and with snorting nostrils he defies the whole world, is indeed a

fine sight. But I hated the grand creature's piteous end, and of course the tortured horses cannot be thought of!

With joy I remember the gorgeous tapestries hung round the great open gallery of the palace court-yard for some solemn religious festivity, a series of wonderful Gothic Gobelins representing stupendous sea battles, which kings and queens, robed in marvellous robes, are serenely contemplating from throne-like seats, every one of them woven through and through with golden thread.

The treasures of Spain delighted and amazed me, and after having seen the Spanish cathedrals all other cathedrals looked small. It was cruel to have so little time at my disposal and not to be in a fit condition to stand fatigue.

It was during this trip abroad that I had my first glimpse of Paris, a town which had always been on King Carol's black list; he considered it a place of perdition, and it was only because I had to go to Dax that I was allowed to set my foot in France and its giddy capital.

Paris being the Mecca of every Roumanian, my husband and I were almost curiosities in the eyes of our subjects for never having been to this city of cities, which attracted them like a magnet.

My sister Ducky (now Grand Duchess Kirill), had a charming apartment in the Avenue Henry Martin, and this she and her husband kindly put at my disposal so that I should not have to go to an hotel.

Numerous Roumanians, enchanted to see me at last in Paris, flocked around me, everybody wanting to offer me some pleasure, eager to introduce me to some of the joys of the gay town. But *der Onkel's* impressive shadow loomed large between me and every temptation, so that it was only with the utmost discretion that I dared accept any invitation.

I was delighted to meet Anna de Noailles, whose company I found exceptionally stimulating. We took to each other from the first. No one talked as well nor as much as Anna, and her conversation was so sparkling and witty that one did not in the least mind never being able to put in a word. I was a good listener; besides, she found in me a type that did not often cross her path and in whom there could be no spirit of competition.

My stay in Paris was all too short and soon I turned my face home-

wards, stimulated and refreshed, and although not yet quite my old self, ready to take up my life and duties again in the eternal old round.

But the old round was not to last much longer ; soon the entire world was to take on another aspect, life's trials another shape. We did not know it, but one and all we were being rolled towards tremendous events.

I was glad to get back to my children and to become really acquainted with my baby Mircea, who was still a little stranger to me. I was glad also to get back to Cotroceni which, with time, had become a home dear to my heart. Each year we had done something to improve it and recently a new bit had been added to the original house, and this addition I had at last been able to build according to my own tastes and desires.

With the years I had learnt to understand and appreciate the art and architecture of the country, and had become the chief promoter of a movement tending towards resuscitating a national style instead of imitating all that came from the West. It sometimes needs a foreigner's eye really to appreciate the beauties of a country, especially when that country is struggling towards development. Those in the ferment of evolution are apt to overlook their own treasures whilst straining towards that which other countries offer.

This love of all things Roumanian had only very gradually ripened in me ; the continual repression of our lives, the constant demand upon our acquiescent obedience had not been conducive to a free development of sympathies. Our roads had been so cut out for us, so limited, so restricted, so hedged in with prohibition that, instead of promoting a love for the country, it had for many years only stirred up a feeling of revolt for all things aggressively national.

This may sound strange, but the prisoner seldom cares for his chains, and for many years my husband and I had felt ourselves yoked to a task, to a duty which had about it no glamour, all flavour of creation having been extirpated by that heavy demand for continual, undiscussed submission.

There may be some who can resign themselves to blind obedience, finding a certain peace and comfort in being led. I did not belong to these. The desire towards freedom and independence was so inherently part of my being that over-severe laws and limitations awoke in me a

feeling of revolt. During all the long years of my apprenticeship I was possessed by a blind but vital urge to break my shackles, and with this unresigned submission to a tyrannical will came an unreasoned feeling of protest against all that was too intimately in league with my subjugation, or what I called "my captivity."

Even marriage seemed to me a curtailing of my own rights as an independent personality. I have never known the gentle charm of giving over my will into another's keeping. One part of my being always stood alone and aloof, a fortress I could not surrender.

So it was only when others began to admit, and even to respect my own separate identity, that I found joy in things pertaining to the country to which my youth had been sacrificed, my youth and with it my every inclination towards expansion and independence.

I am aware that, in confessing this, I am not putting myself in a specially pleasant light, but it is so completely the key to my inner nature that it is necessary to mention it if my life and personality are really to be understood.

Though essentially sociable and loving to be in close contact with others, though seemingly gay and carefree, even at times considered frivolous, the real inner "me" was solitary, needed absolute independence, needed to stand alone and to be "free."

CHAPTER XXVII

ROUMANIA AT WAR

ON July the 23rd, 1913, Roumania finally declared war on Bulgaria, and Bucarest went mad with delirious excitement, as for months many had been clamouring for this development of the over-tense political situation.

It is curious that a declaration of war always arouses such popular enthusiasm; an unreasoned delight seems to possess the masses as though it were an occasion for great rejoicing.

I remember driving through the streets with my husband and how the crowds surged round our motor, cheering frantically and many even climbing up on to its steps to be as near to us as possible, waving their caps and shouting for all they were worth.

It would be difficult and too long to make a résumé of the entire Balkan wars of 1912-13, but it is perhaps necessary to explain why there was a party in Roumania so keen to enter in with Serbia, Greece, Bulgaria and Montenegro, when those countries on October the 5th, 1912, declared war on the Turks.

Roumania considered she had an historical right to the Rustchuk-Varna line in Bulgaria, and if she had entered as an ally she might have raised her voice, or if she could not stand for her larger demands, have at least become possessor of the Silistria-Balcic line so essential to her for the defence of her great Danube bridge.

The war party had by every means tried to coerce King Carol into joining immediately in the fray, but Uncle was strongly opposed to war and preferred entering into diplomatic negotiations with the Bulgarians, whilst he declared Roumania neutral, at the same time keeping close watch upon events and continually raising his voice, and insisting upon our national claims.

The rapid advance of the Serbs and Bulgarians came somewhat as a

surprise. Uncle had thought the Turks more able to resist, but they were beaten by the Serbs at Kumanovo and by the Bulgarians at Kirk Kilisse and Burgas and on October the 27th the Bulgarians were already standing before Constantinople.

This excited the Roumanian war party to loud and belligerent manifestations, led by Take Ionescu, which caused Uncle great difficulty, as he was determined to keep his country out of war as long as possible.

At this time we had a Conservative Government headed by Maiorescu, a steady gentleman full of deliberation and of one mind with his king.

Conferences were being held in different places, in Bucarest, Sofia, and also in London, but the Bulgarians, full of their successes and confident of finally possessing Constantinople, were not easy to treat with.

A second London conference assembled in February, 1913, which finally accepted Roumania's claims to Silistria, but Russia's attitude was uncertain and gave us anxiety.

At this period Adrianople fell to the joint forces of Bulgarians, Serbs and Greeks, but suddenly the situation became tense and electrical because of disagreements between the Serbs, Greeks and Bulgarians upon Macedonian questions. This created a critical state of affairs amongst these neighbours, at no time overfond of each other.

On April the 26th, 1913, a conference was called together in St. Petersburg to debate upon the Balkan situation, during which Roumania's claim to Silistria was definitely recognized.

Unable to come to any peaceful understanding with Bulgaria, on June the 13th Serbia and Greece declared war upon their former ally, who had treacherously started to attack them in Salonica, and this was followed up by Roumania's declaration of war on June the 23rd. But Roumania was too late to join in with the fighting, as the Serbs and Greeks had already been victorious without her aid.

Nevertheless, our troops crossed into Bulgaria at several places on rapidly constructed pontoon-bridges. My husband had command of the troops and Carol went with him. General Averescu, one of Uncle's most trusted generals, was Chief-of-the-Staff.

On July the 3rd old King Carol went down to Măgura and Bechet to witness this crossing of his army into Bulgaria. I was also allowed to be there. All the places he came to were familiar to him, reminding



KING CAROL ON THE DANUBE IN 1913, WITH GENERAL AVERESCU AND CROWN PRINCE FERDINAND



IN NATIONAL DRESS: MY TWO SONS AND I, IN THE SINAIA FOREST

him vividly of the Russo-Turkish campaign of 1876-7 which ended in Roumania's gaining her independence from the Turks.

The Bulgarians, at the end of their tether after a ten months' campaign, put up no resistance, so our troops advanced rapidly, hardly a shot being fired, and almost immediately King Ferdinand began asking for peace.

On July the 12th our cavalry was standing close before Sofia, but Uncle, out of a feeling of delicacy towards King Ferdinand, would not allow our troops to march into the Bulgarian capital. Wise in all things, King Carol knew that certain humiliations should be avoided because of the spirit of never-ending resentment they engender.

This was of course a great disappointment to men and officers; I remember hearing both sides of the question, the military as well as the political.

It resulted in no battles, but whilst on enemy's ground our troops encountered as deadly a foe as cannons—cholera.

I was brought into sudden contact with this terrible scourge when I went to visit the troops and the Red Cross hospitals scattered along the Danube. Up to then I had had nothing to do with war or with any of the horrors inherent in epidemics. I was appalled by what I saw, but at the same time ardent desire to help alleviate the suffering of our soldiers was suddenly born within me. Something never before felt rose from the very core of my being, an immense urge towards service, a great wish to be of use, even to sacrifice myself if necessary, to put myself entirely at the disposal of my people.

I cannot help looking upon that sudden contact with cholera as a turning-point in my life. It was my first initiation into suffering on a large scale: a thing never before known, heard of no doubt, but as something far away with which I should never have anything to do. And here it was, rising huge before me to throb through my whole being as a message sent to awaken within me sleeping forces of which I had never been aware.

Several of my acquaintances, amongst others Elise Bratianu, had gone out with the Red Cross to organize hospitals and to nurse what they imagined would be the wounded, but they had received the order not to cross the Danube.

I went from place to place visiting the sick, and my horror grew as

I began to investigate the conditions in which these hospitals and barracks were being run.

I had long talks with Elise Bratianu and her "right-hand," Mademoiselle Slivici, and Elise told me I could help a great deal if I went seriously to work.

In those days I was still very diffident about my own capacities, but Elise Bratianu always knew how to put me on my mettle and to arouse in me a desire to do, to give my best.

Disobeying the order that no woman might go over the Danube, I paid a flying visit to the Bulgarian side, crossing almost secretly on one of the boat bridges erected by our troops. There, in a forlorn village, I saw sights which made my blood run cold.

Cholera brings panic in its wake. The lightning rapidity and virulence with which it attacks and overthrows its victims, the way it manifests itself, is indeed shattering to the strongest nerves.

In that nearly forsaken hospital on Bulgarian ground I found many of our soldiers almost abandoned and dying for the want of nursing and proper care. This gave me a terrible shock, especially when I realized that our sanitary organization had counted upon wounded, but was not properly equipped to meet this form of disaster. Everything seemed to be lacking, and the doctors were waging a losing battle, which brought consternation and confusion into our ranks.

This was my first contact with a horrible and deadly reality. The effect it had on me was galvanizing. Sleeping energies seemed suddenly to awaken and an irresistible urge to be of help.

There was one thing I entirely lacked—physical fear; my splendid health lent me nerves of steel. Looking about me I felt that what was wanted was a leader, an encourager, one high enough placed to have authority, and who by remaining calm and steady could become a rallying point for those who were beginning to lose their heads.

I met Dr. Jean Cantacuzène and his assistant Dr. Slatineanu, who were on a tour of inspection. They were much horrified by the difficulties they encountered. I had a long talk with them and they too told me I could help enormously if I called upon all my energies; being Crown Princess, they declared people would listen to me and be ready to follow my lead.

So I hurried to Sinaia to talk with Uncle, pleading my cause so

urgently that I won from him permission to take over the cholera camp of Zimnicea, one of the principal points where our troops were to recross the Danube on their way home.

Carol, who had been with his father, asked permission to come and help me and he became my right hand, carrying out all my instructions and showing great personal energy and initiative. He was a good and steady worker and liked being my keeper.

It was astounding what we were able to do in a short time. My appeal to the different authorities and also to many personal friends brought me in rich provisions, so my hands were always full and I could appear everywhere as a dispenser of those "extras" unobtainable in military camps.

For such rough work I could of course only employ women ready to face any situation, fearless, selfless women who would work under any conditions. So I called upon Sister Pucci, head of the nuns of St. Vincent de Paul, a wonderful old lady I had known for several years.

Sister Pucci, an Italian by birth, was a saint in every sense of the word. She did not hesitate a moment about answering my call and bringing a goodly number of sisters with her; we pitched a large tent for them in the centre of the cholera camp, and here these brave women did heroic work.

It would lead me too far were I to give a full description of those two weeks spent amongst our troops on that bare and dreadful field of suffering. The work was hard, the sights heart-rending, but difficulties only multiplied our courage and energy.

Old Sister Pucci was like a mother to me. Her vast tent, full of camp-beds and rough deal boxes, became my refuge at those moments when I needed a little rest.

At first the doctors in charge of the camp met me with a certain scepticism; they were inclined to think I should be a hindrance rather than a help. It is true that I knew nothing about sickness, but I did not pretend that I had come as a nurse; but what I could be was a leader, an upholder, one to whom everybody could turn for help.

I had a healthy human being's horror of sickness, but I put all my pride into not showing a sign of what I felt; on the contrary I was always there where the infection was at its climax, gritting my teeth so as to stand the sights and smells. This was indeed an occasion to

show my mettle, to prove that I was not only a gay and giddy princess.

Soon doctors, orderlies, soldiers, officers and sisters of charity became my most ardent adherents; I was never tired or discouraged, I would allow no difficulty to beat me, the harder the work the more strength did I find, and in a few days I had become the pivot around which everything revolved.

We were working under difficulties, far from every centre, the roads impossible, transport slow. The weather was trying, fierce heat broken by almost tropical rain. At times our field became a lake of mud through which I waded in heavy riding boots. Our wards were huge wooden barracks insufficiently lighted, torrid when the sun shone, wet when it rained. The invalids lay on pallets of straw, one stretched beside the other, a mud path running down between the two rows of beds. We had no mattresses and next to no linen.

An added problem were the troops who had to be isolated in neighbouring camps for fear of the infection spreading. These men could not be demobilized before each one had been examined. It was a trying ordeal as they were all eager to get back to their homes and to their fields. Here too I came in useful, as I continually visited these men who could not understand why they were kept thus, herded up together, whilst the unreaped harvest was calling to them from the four corners of the land.

I visited them regularly, talked to them, kept up their courage, brought them cigarettes, flowers and any good thing I could lay hands upon. They began to count on my visits and the moment they saw me coming from afar, they would all rush to meet my car, with shouts of excited welcome.

These troops knew me well because I had been with them on the day when they had recrossed the Danube into Roumania. I stood on the home side shore: four hours I stood there, as they came tramping over the pontoon-bridge. I witnessed scenes of mad elation when the men, eager to feel their native soil again, actually rolled in the dust. I received their first cheers and it was my voice which called out to them the first welcome home.

This was a strong link between us.

A certain Colonel Rujinski was in command of the troops, and he

became my most invaluable keeper. With Carol, he seconded my every effort. He had the right military spirit, combining order and discipline with kindness and understanding. He was ever ready to advise, help and make possible the impossible.

Very soon I also became firm friends with the doctors. They quickly realized that I never interfered with anything which I did not understand; I had simply come to offer my help and to be of assistance in every possible, practical way; I was a person of authority to whom all could turn when in difficulties.

Dr. Jean Cantacuzène's dearest pupils were working in a wooden construction at the farther end of the field. Here they had set up a provisional laboratory in which day and night they slaved, preparing serum and making those many analyses so essential during epidemics. The brothers Cuica were foremost amongst these apostles for the welfare of humanity. From time to time I visited them to bring them a word of good cheer, but I never remained long enough to disturb their work. I soon understood that, in a country where every sort of work is arduous and difficult, an occasional royal visit is a great encouragement to those whose labour is continual and seldom recognized.

I also managed to make friends with Doctors Lupu and Cadere, two gentlemen of advanced ideas none too inclined to see virtue in princes and very doubtful about a princess being of any practical value. This attitude did not offend me, but it amused me to make them change their minds. We learnt mutually to appreciate each other, and those weeks, when we all worked together, each in his own way giving his utmost, created a link which held through the years.

Everybody blessed me for having brought Sister Pucci. Her tent became a centre of comfort to which all came when needing any special aid or even only a little good advice, because we were indeed living amongst appalling sights and much suffering.

Often, exhausted by the weight of all the distress around me, I would take refuge beneath her canvas. Seated on an overturned box I would watch her at her work, paddling about with bare feet in ankle-deep mud, the rain dismally dripping down upon the beds.

I remember her thus one day, cooking a couple of skinny chickens destined for the hard-working doctors. Her blue skirts were looped up, the two ends of her white wimple resembling sea-gulls' wings or the

white cyclamen to which I always compared it, calling her and her sisters "mes Sœurs Cyclamen." The iron stove she was using steamed, the whole tent was full of dense vapours. There we sat and chattered and often we laughed, for laughter is a healthy antidote to care and keeps you sane amidst trouble and distress. Sister Pucci and I could laugh gloriously. She was a holy woman but not sanctimonious; thus could she, the Catholic, and I, the Protestant, understand each other completely, the love of others bound us together beyond the differences of faith.

There were no barriers between Sister Pucci and myself, it was as though we had known each other always; neither caste nor religion separated us, we were two human beings each in her own way doing her best.

Those days in the cholera camp cemented a friendship between us which only ended with her death.

My lady-in-waiting Mme. Mavrodi accompanied me, a placid lady who left good alone, and also Hélène Perticari, of whom I have already spoken elsewhere. Hélène was a fearless enthusiast, worthy daughter of her father, Dr. Davila, at one time head of the Military Sanitary Service, and whose name is still blessed by many in Roumania. Though of delicate health Hélène had inherited her father's spirit, and was ever ready to answer any call I sent out to her; she was always faithfully devoted.

There are two others I must mention before I leave my cholera camp, and those two are Vladimir Ghyca and Constance Cantacuzène. Vladimir Ghyca, a descendant of ancient Roumanian princes, was by vocation a priest. Profoundly in sympathy with the Roman Catholic Church, he had however resisted going over openly to that faith because of an old and much-loved mother who would have been heartbroken had her son forsaken the Orthodox religion in which he had been christened. But heart and soul he belonged to those rare few whose urge it is to offer up their lives in the service of others; like Sister Pucci, by nature Vladimir was a saint.

With the nuns with whom he had always been in close contact, he had followed my call, offering his services as simple sanitary assistant, choosing to take up his work in the darkest of all our wards, the one we

called "Hell," where the most hopeless cases were brought, where death was reaping the richest harvest.

Here he volunteered to do night service amongst the dying, unabashed, unafraid, admitting of no fatigue, allowing no horror to repulse him; a missionary in the noblest sense of the word, and with that he was a pale, frail man, seemingly bloodless and of delicate health.

Much later in life we were destined to differ upon religious questions, but we never could forget how together we had shared those days of danger and trial; it left a bond between us which religious disagreement could not completely sever.

Constance Cantacuzène, sister of Dr. Jean Cantacuzène, of whom I have already several times spoken, was quite a different type. A woman no longer young, masculine in her attitude, picturesque of language, cheerful, masterful, brilliantly intelligent, she was running a flying hospital at her own expense. She was always there where danger was greatest; she had even managed to slip over into Bulgaria, where she had been of invaluable aid when the cholera scare broke out.

Now she had set up her hospital just beyond the confines of our camp and had taken some of our worst cases where they were looked after in real beds.

I continually visited her. She was a great comfort to me; a more amusing, invigorating companion could not be imagined; clever, witty, often ironical, she was healthily stimulating. Her robust common sense hid beneath a somewhat crusty exterior a warm heart which she took a sort of pride in concealing. It was never sufficiently known how much Constance Cantacuzène did to relieve our soldiers' suffering, but here I wish to render her unstinted homage and with it to offer her my deepest admiration and gratitude.

A characteristic trait of our Roumanian peasant is his love for flowers. It was touching what joy I could give my sick when I brought them flowers. Almost daily I had hamperfuls sent from our Sinaia gardens and would wander endlessly through our dismal wooden wards bringing flowers to my sufferers. The moment I appeared, my arms full of my fragrant offering, a hundred hands would stretch out towards me, eager for the smallest sprig.

Many would place these above their heads, thrust through their card

of identity pinned against the walls, where I would find them next day, colourless and faded. Those too sick to move would lay them close against their lips or cheeks as though the cool, coloured petals brought them relief, and hundreds of eyes followed me with looks of gratitude.

I also laid many flowers on the graves of those we were not able to save . . . In the names of their mothers, wives and sisters, I laid them there, under the rays of our great Roumanian sun.

But it was not only the sick that wanted my flowers ; there was hardly a soldier I met going about his work who did not stop and stretch out his hand towards me for a rose, a dahlia, a marigold, a china-aster, which he would then proudly fasten in his cap or on the front of his tunic.

On the day when I was to leave, I asked my husband to come and we held a giant Requiem in the middle of that field which had seen such suffering but also such heroic work. The Requiem was followed by a Te Deum of thanksgiving because the terrible plague had been overcome and our men could now return to their homes.

The troops stood in a huge square, and everyone who had 'worked on that great field flocked together for this parting ceremony.

It was a moving ceremony ; we had all become firm friends, and all the priests' gorgeous vestments, over the uncovered heads of the soldiers, over Sister Pucci's snowy wimple and over my white nurse's dress.

It was a moving ceremony ; we had all become firm friends, and although we were full of gratitude because we could at last consider the epidemic overcome, we were sad to part, because nothing binds as firmly as mutual work.

The ceremony over, I made the round of all those assembled together in that huge square and decorated every single man with a flower, officers, doctors, orderlies, soldiers—row upon row of them so that there was no one who did not wear a bit of colour on that day of leave-taking, and as I passed along their ranks all the soldiers cheered, their young voices mounting in chorus towards heaven ; but my eyes were filled with tears, thinking of the men I had seen die and who would nevermore return to dear ones who awaited them.

Several years later (by that time I was Queen) I was being officially received in a small town of Moldavia and it was Colonel Rujinski's regi-

ment which happened to line the road along which I had to pass, and in memory of that far-off cholera camp where I used to bring flowers to his troops, every single man wore a flower in his buttonhole and cheered me with special ardour.

Once again, during the War, I came quite unexpectedly upon Rujinski's regiment; they, however, knew the Queen was coming, but as no flowers were to be had then, a small fir-twigg had been stuck into every cap and immediately I knew, without being told, which regiment it was. This moved me more than I can say as it was a proof that there are some who know how to keep memory green.

After this tremendous experience amongst our soldiers in the Zimnicea cholera camp, I was never quite the same again.

Reality had come to me in a way I should nevermore forget, and having learnt what it was to serve, in the broader sense of the word, it changed my conception of things and roused in me the desire to be of real national utility.

I had now six children and I had the feeling that this essential part of my duty was at an end. I had not disappointed Roumania in its expectations; the royal family was copiously established, three sons and three daughters; now other work lay before me and I looked into the future, with wider interests than solely those of my own household.

I know by much that I was later given to read about myself that I have been considered an ambitious, intriguing woman, with vast plans and a desire to play a predominant part, even in world politics. I read these descriptions of myself with astonishment, because they certainly do not correspond with truth. I was, on the contrary, almost reprehensibly indifferent to politics, even to those of my country, having, because of Uncle's complete absorption in them, a horror even of the word "politics."

Everything in me had developed slowly and I had never felt the slightest desire to play a part, but I always had a great desire to be loved; to be popular with my people. This seemed easy to me, *parceque j'avais le cœur sur la main*, and being always well-disposed towards others, I could not believe I should not be given unlimited credit. My chief urge was towards independence and a mighty desire to live my life as agreeably as possible, but in my own way.

My life, however, was never really "agreeable," or free. It was at times happy, often interesting, but it was a difficult life, full of accumulated restrictions, and had meant from the first day of my arrival in Roumania a continual steering through a thousand traps and pitfalls amongst people eternally on the look-out to find me at fault and to discover complicated reasons behind my every action. What I did and left undone was continually criticized, and no one admitted that a woman of my exuberant temperament could be completely harmless or uncomplicated.

My absolute frankness and disconcerting simplicity could not be accepted as genuine; it would have been too easy an explanation of my character; something had to be sought for behind my eternal good-humour and over-trustful attitude towards life and human beings. So a legend of relentless ambition was woven around me and my honest face was rendered unrecognizable to myself by the mask I was supposed to wear. People somehow preferred to see me thus.

I have often pondered over this perverting of truth, and finally came to the conclusion that, being so absolutely sure of my own good faith and excellent intentions, I never took any trouble to explain myself, nor was I careful enough of outward appearances or what I said. I let my good-humour run away with me, and when the spirit of fun came over me caution was always cast to the wind.

But in 1913 things had definitely changed and my work in the cholera camp had suddenly brought me before my people in another light.

Besides, having now broader acquaintances, more interesting people had come into my life; I was better informed than I used to be and certain newer influences around Uncle had made him understand that I could become useful if handled in a tactful way. It was essential not to try and break my will, but gradually to develop my natural intelligence by setting before me what I could become for my country if I could learn to take myself and my duties more seriously.

So King Carol, now no longer influenced by Cousin Charly who, tired of Roumania, had found another hunting-ground, began to look upon me as one who one day might intelligently help to carry on his work. He spoke to me about Roumania, about her troubles, hopes and ambitions, no more as a schoolmaster to a pupil but as to a co-worker able to understand; and there were others also, besides King Carol,

who thought it worth while to prepare me for the years that were to come.

In the autumn of 1913 I paid my last visit to Mamma at Tegernsee. Of course I did not know that it was my last visit and everybody adored Mircea, my baby, who was a beautiful child, although more backward than our other children had been.

On December the 27th of the same year my mother-in-law died and we all went to Sigmaringen for the funeral. Although his mother had had two slight strokes and had to a certain degree lost her power of speech and thought, this was a great grief to my husband as it was the final breaking up of the old home.

Many royalties flocked together to render the last honours to the woman who had once been a great beauty, and amongst these were the Kaiser and the King of Saxony, the latter being a nephew of Fürstin Antonia and closely attached to the Hohenzollern family. His mother, who had died many years before, had been my mother-in-law's sister, also an Infanta of Portugal, a worthy and very Catholic lady, but who had none of Antonia's beauty.

The King of Saxony was known for his plainness of speech. He had a heart of gold and was well-loved by his people; but it was not his way to "beflower" his language; besides, he spoke broad Saxon, not the most melodious of German dialects.

I have an amused remembrance of him at the large family lunch after the funeral; a meal at which those not overwhelmed by grief occasionally have a tendency to expand rather too much under the comforting influence of food and drink.

The Kaiser and the King sat facing each other on the broad side of the table and conversation flowed freely and a little more loudly than strictly in keeping with funeral conventions. But the King of Saxony had one of those voices that knew little about minor keys.

Spreading out his napkin with a sigh of content he leaned over towards my brother-in-law William, who was, so to say, chief mourner and exclaimed in a cheerful tone: "Well, William my boy, it's a good thing your church ceremony did not last any longer or your mother would not have been the only corpse!" This was an allusion to the freezing temperature of the family crypt.

William, taken aback, stuttered some sort of reply, and looking at my husband, I saw how he was hovering between amusement and righteous indignation. But, nothing abashed, the jovial gentleman now turned towards his imperial colleague and began asking him questions in a bantering tone, his voice ringing through the hushed chamber.

The Kaiser was going from Sigmaringen to Austria to shoot with the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, and the King of Saxony was interested in every detail and finally inquired what the Kaiser intended to wear in the evening during his visit, plain clothes or uniform. The Kaiser demurred for a moment and then voted for uniform. "Right you are!" exclaimed the cheerful guest. "Right you are, because you look hideous in plain clothes!"

Such was this outspoken king of whom it is said that once, after the revolution, when travelling through what had formerly been his land, he was asked by his ex-subjects to show himself at the window of his carriage.

Acceding to the demands of the people, he looked down with a grin upon the cheering crowd beneath him and called out: "Well, I must say you are a fine set of Republicans!"

After the World War William of Hohenzollern's two twin sons married two of the King of Saxony's daughters, their second cousins.

CHAPTER XXVIII

PRINCE CAROL

CAROL was growing up and I somewhat anxiously watched his progress. I distinctly had the feeling that all was not well with him.

Uncle's mistaken ideas about being the only one qualified to choose those who were to educate our children (especially the two eldest) for several years imposed a queer little Swiss tutor upon our household. This inconspicuous little man had been selected with much to-do, after *reifliches Ueberlegen* and according to careful recommendations of people whom Uncle trusted. That he was a Swiss seemed to Uncle, who admired the Swiss, a guarantee of virtue and perfection.

I will not speak ill of the unfortunate; the man has suffered, and finally went to pieces with remorse, but not before having done much harm.

Monsieur Z. was a problem to us from the beginning, he periodically filled me with exasperation or pity. Alas, with me, pity was always strongest; but in this case pity was almost a crime. But I had learnt so much patience that I imagined that here also patience might win the day. Besides, Z. had almost lovable sides to his character; he was a passionate botanist and a great lover of Nature, and could show extreme attachment to man and beast.

The truth was (but we only discovered this later) Z. was neuro-pathic, and added to this he had pronounced socialistic ideas. Outwardly he seemed humble and harmless enough, but inclined to fits of melancholy and misanthropy he was ever frequently an intolerable wet blanket at our board, and little by little we noticed that he was alienating Carol from us. The boy always wanted to be alone with his tutor and would no longer enter into any of our family fun.

My husband and I were not without apprehensions; we had an uncanny feeling, but we could not understand what was really going on.

Carol did not speak much, but we guessed that Z. was filling his mind with disturbing doubts, especially about being a prince and a soldier, also that he was confusing him about religious questions; in fact that Z.'s influence upon our son was not quite healthy or satisfactory.

But Uncle, having chosen the perplexing gentleman, was loath to admit that he had been ill-advised and treated our complaints as ill-will on our part against one he had so carefully selected. Uncle, not living under one roof with Z., never saw him at his worst. When he appeared at H.M.'s table, his attitude was so humble and unassuming that the real character of the man could not be recognized.

Only our two doctors, Romalo and Mamulea, saw more clearly; Z. was a pathological case, but had that strange power over Carol's mind which is sometimes given to the unhinged.

There is no doubt that my husband and I were *too* patient and in this case reprehensibly submissive to Uncle's decrees. Z. ought never to have been left as sole companion of a young boy on the brink of life.

However, our every cry of warning was nipped in the bud by Uncle, who declared he wished Z. to remain, in spite of the trouble he was to us, and Auntie declared that one so well versed in the Bible must be a good and holy man.

It was the doctors who finally opened King Carol's eyes, but the harm had been done. Z. was sent away, but too late.

I now realized that what above all Carol needed was a complete change of atmosphere and I inspired Uncle with the idea that our son ought to be sent to Potsdam, to the same regiment where his father and uncle had served, for I had the feeling that Carol must be taught the real meaning of discipline and order in a place where he was of no paramount importance.

It is strange that I, the Englishwoman, was the one who proposed this to the two Hohenzollerns. Uncle, so stern in general, was incomprehensibly lenient in all that concerned our children. Here his severity, and even his usual sagacity, seemed to give out; besides, he and my husband were so disconcertingly slow, even when there was really no time to lose. Carol had reached a stage when he needed to be taken firmly in hand.

My proposal, which had at first taken the King and the Prince by surprise, was finally considered logical and practical, and in January,

1914, Carol was actually sent to Potsdam to serve for a time in the well-known Erste Garderegiment.

General Perticari, a very intelligent man, former A.D.C. of King Carol, was attached to our son, and with them, to keep house for both, went Hélène, the general's wife, who had been my friend from almost the first day of my arrival in Roumania.

Hélène had been, and still was, an out-of-the-way good-looking woman, tall, with red hair and large, wide-open eyes under beautiful arched eyebrows. Much younger than her husband, who had married her for love, he was still very proud of her, but Hélène was one of those who always gave more than she received. Passionate in all she did, she took over this new charge with the enthusiasm she put into everything in life. Hélène was so rich of heart that she always offered more than others were ready to take and this made of her life a series of almost tragic disappointments. She was many-sided, gay, extremely well-informed and a great patriot. She had stuck to me through good days and bad, always pouring from her an inexhaustible wealth of affection that no disillusionment or disappointment was ever able to dry up.

Carol seemed to take kindly to his new surroundings and in the spring of 1914 his father and I went to pay him a visit on our way to Russia.

CHAPTER XXIX

1914: NATIONAL AND DOMESTIC

It is necessary for future events that I should here mention that, in the last years of his reign, King Carol's politics, which had been exclusively on the side of the Triple Alliance, underwent certain changes.

I unwillingly bring in politics, but we were advancing towards tremendous upheavals, so that it is not possible that I should not try and explain in my own modest way how Roumania gradually turned from the Triple Alliance to the Entente. Later on I had something to do with this, but it is only fair to myself and others that I should reach back a little to relate how it all began.

Roumania was *de facto*, though it was not officially admitted, the fourth in the Triple Alliance. I cannot remember when the first understanding was come to nor the first pact signed, but I know that in 1914 it was renewed.

Uncle's deepest convictions made him absolutely loyal to this treaty, which he considered beneficial to his country although it was never publicly acknowledged, or really officially known. Whenever Uncle changed his government, he would confide this treaty, under the promise of secrecy, to his Prime Minister of the moment.

There are, however, few who know how or even care faithfully to keep a secret, and though not officially confirmed, most of the political world knew, or anyhow guessed, that Roumania was a fourth in the Triple Alliance.

Uncle's loyalty towards this secret, and yet not secret enough, treaty, was increasingly put to the test owing to difficulties and conflicts constantly encountered because of Austria-Hungary's behaviour towards the Roumanians living beyond our frontiers.

Up to the present, Roumania's chief resentment had been against Russia, whom she looked upon as an oppressor and false friend ever since the Turkish War of 1876-7, when Russia called upon Roumanian

military aid when fighting the Turks. Roumania had efficiently assisted the Russians at a critical moment with her small but valiant army; but instead of reaping the reward she deserved she had been despoiled by her mighty neighbour of certain parts of Bessarabia, thickly populated with Roumanians. The compensations received in the Dobrogea had not healed Roumania's wounds.

This resentment against Russia had for several decades been so strong that the Transylvanian-Bucovinean question had lain dormant. *Russia* was the chief foe and danger.

Unfortunately for the Triple Alliance, Austria-Hungary had two faces, the German and the Magyar; the latter was hated by the Roumanians. In spite of repeated warnings sent by King Carol to Vienna, the persecution of our people under Hungarian sway never lessened and this filled Roumanian hearts with bitterness. Besides, Hungary invented every possible economic and administrative chicane against our country and was insufferable on the Danube question, so important to us but too lengthy to relate here.

The long and the short of it was that, little by little, Uncle found himself facing an ever-increasing feeling against Hungary, which made the old resentment against Russia gradually pale before this new cause for complaint.

King Carol's appeal to Germany, as chief ally, to bring pressure to bear upon Hungary, had little or no success. The Hungarians disliked the Germans almost as much as the Roumanians and behaved just as ruthlessly with the Germans (Saxons) living in their territories.

France and Russia, continually on the watch, were naturally well aware of all this and began a clever propaganda on their side so as to weaken Roumania's loyalty towards the Central Powers. France, always loved by Roumania, was well to the fore, Russia being careful not to show her face too soon.

In spite of all this, King Carol did not budge an inch from his loyalty, though he watched with anxiety the consequences of the German blunders. Having gained almost entirely the Roumanian market and being also financially closely bound up with Roumania, perhaps Germany felt over-sure of her ally.

Curiously enough it was in Berlin, under Kiderlen-Wächter's rule at the Foreign Office (the one-time German Minister in Bucarest), that

Uncle found the least hearing, and this, into the bargain, at a period when an entirely Germanophile Government was in power. This roused a feeling of pained resentment in Uncle and I remember his speaking about it more than once to my husband; but in those days I did not understand the importance of what I heard.

King Carol let Berlin know that his loyalty was being sorely tried and that, if Berlin allowed Austria-Hungary to become the chief leader of the Triple Alliance, he would no more be able to guarantee what would happen in Roumania, as Austro-Hungarian politics in the Balkans were entirely selfish, continually running counter to Roumanian and Serbian interests, thereby creating serious danger for the future.

Personally, Uncle had more sympathy for the Serbs than for the Bulgarians, as he had no great faith in King Ferdinand, whom he considered untrustworthy.

Entirely conscious of how the Franco-Russian propaganda was gaining ground in his country, he made every possible effort to open Berlin's eyes, but although this warning came straight from the Head of State himself, Berlin paid little attention, whilst the opposite propaganda was progressively undermining German prestige in Roumania.

Deeply offended that his voice found so little echo in Berlin where he had been accustomed to be listened to, and feeling that he was being slighted by the allies to whom he had been so faithful, King Carol began to let things go and set up no further active opposition to the Franco-Russian propaganda which continually gained ground, the Transylvanian question finally completely overshadowing the Bessarabian.

One of the things Uncle also most specially resented was that the German Ministers at Bucarest were changed without preliminary warning. He had been accustomed to the Wilhelmstrasse showing him respect, but during Kiderlen-Wächter's rule this polite habit was ignored and King Carol was especially upset by the sudden recalling of Dr. Rosen, who had grasped the Near East situation thoroughly, understood the King of Roumania's wise politics and was a help in every way. The Balkan questions were intricate and easily explosive, and it was a mistake to replace a well-informed and approved Minister by an uninitiated outsider at a moment when a crisis was at hand.

My part in this new orientation of politics is supposed to have been

predominant even then, but this does not correspond with the truth. I was in those days still an absolutely negligible quantity and would never have dreamed of having a political opinion of my own. Others may have had their eyes upon me as a factor for the future, but if they did, I was completely unconscious of their machinations.

My sympathy for Russia was purely sentimental, I being much attached to my Russian relations, and I was often pained when I realized how much my husband and his uncle disliked and mistrusted this, my mother's country.

It is true that I had never felt German but English, though much of what was German was sympathetic to me, and that I was always eager to promote any understanding between England and Roumania; but England never showed any particular interest in my adopted country, which I often regretted.

When the idea of a marriage between our son, Carol, and Olga, the eldest daughter of the Tsar, was proposed, I was more against than for it, because I feared that uncanny illness (*hæmophilia*) which the women of certain families are supposed to give to their sons. I knew that poor Alix had given this illness to her heir, and I dared not face such a risk for our family. Gladly would I have welcomed one of Nicky's daughters had it not been for this, as, besides the ties of affection, it was a most flattering proposal, especially as it had been brought forward from the Russian side. But when we were asked to pay a visit to Tsarskoye Selo and to bring our son with us, Uncle, as well as my husband and myself, considered it ungracious to refuse; besides, I was always keen to go to Russia.

Our first *étape* was Potsdam, to visit Carol in his temporary home, which was being so lovingly and efficiently run by Hélène Perticari.

It can easily be imagined with what joy she received us and how she did everything to make us comfortable. I still remember a lovely dinner-table she arranged for us, one mass of double pink and white tulips, the stalks of which had been dipped into some sort of dye so that the leaves had become copper-coloured; I am generally averse from any improving upon nature, but for once this was really a lovely result and most artistic.

Carol seemed contented at Potsdam and had taken kindly to the mili-

tary atmosphere; besides, he had the pleasure of having as a friend his cousin Friedel, elder of the Hohenzollern twins, who was serving in the same regiment.

Friedel was a wee, earnest little fellow made adamant by marvellous royal principles as to duty and obligations, which nothing could sap. He and I, since his early childhood, were firm and special friends, and he greeted me with enthusiasm, delighted to see me at Potsdam and, knowing my love for horses, showed me with pride a fine grey he had just bought which immediately on the day of my arrival I had to visit in its stables.

Potsdam is an ideal ground for riding, being all sand, and the Crown Prince, though just then absent, had arranged that I could ride his horses. He had a fine stable and also all his horses were greys, as he was commander of the Death's-Head Hussars who were entirely mounted on grey or white horses.

So I enjoyed splendid gallops on the sandy Potsdam ground proudly mounted on one of William's thoroughbred greys, but it was his brother, Eitel Friedrich, who was my riding companion, a most amiable and kindly cousin, but a heavy-weight. Afraid not to be able to follow my proverbial pace, he had a second horse to meet him half-way.

I enjoyed revisiting Sans-Souci and the Neues Palais with its fine park, just then a mass of crocuses sown in coloured squadrons of violet, yellow and white. I was struck by the huge progress gardening had made in Germany.

Before we continued on our way to Russia, Kaiser Wilhelm asked us to spend a few days with him at Berlin.

Of course my mighty cousin had heard of the Russian marriage project. Although he mostly professed a certain contempt for Roumania, I am not sure that he was pleased to see the trend of her politics and sympathies towards his enemies, although at that time I do not think he knew how much disliked he was. *He* had no ill-feelings, he was only too sure of himself, of his might, of his *Deutscher Gott*.

The Empress was absent and this made the atmosphere less stiff and official, and William was a more cheerful host than Augusta Victoria; besides, he happened to be in excellent humour and took the trouble to be hospitable and amiable. He even went as far as to talk to me as though I really existed, which he had never done before. Whether this

was for political reasons, I do not know, but I prefer to imagine that it was because he was enjoying my company as, undeniably, I was enjoying his. I certainly found him most interesting and entertaining.

He had the unusual quality of being able to describe things and people correctly and in detail. When I asked him about Emperor Nicky's daughters, whom he knew quite well, I discovered he was one of the rare people who could put others before you as they were, make a real picture of them.

Most people have a conventional, stereotyped way of describing others, but I immediately saw that William really knew these girls he had often met whilst cruising in the Baltic Sea, and that he had studied their different characters and knew the peculiarities of each.

Conversation at meals was gay and animated and my husband looked pleased. Being over-modest and shy, Nando could seldom create an atmosphere, but he felt hurt when William treated him with indifference.

Whilst we were there, the Kaiser was to open an enormous new library which had just been completed according to his plans and desires. I think the central hall was supposed to have one of the largest domes in existence and to be a marvellous feat of architecture. He asked us to take part in the official ceremony, and as the Empress was not there, it fell to my share to walk arm-in-arm with him in the solemn procession through this magnificent building.

I am grateful that this occasion was offered me to see, I may even say to *feel*, Kaiser Wilhelm in all his Prussian glory, during a ceremony when he expanded in an atmosphere profoundly congenial to him and characteristic of truly German achievement.

"Es ist erreicht": the celebrated words with which the Kaiser's moustache-holder was then being boomed in numerous advertisements was written large over this festivity.

Es ist erreicht. It has been achieved! I felt that this was really Emperor William's Germany, something which had been moulded according to his taste and the ideal he was reaching out for. This colossal building stood for success: huge, solid, somewhat flashy, somewhat too splendid, too new, but an attainment, mighty, audacious, with a touch of aggressiveness about it, almost a challenge in fact.

As I solemnly walked down the great hall beside my cousin, I felt

rather as though I was on the stage; the grand entry in *Tannhäuser*, or *Aida*. The Kaiser was in his white Cuirassier uniform, a martial figure with his upturned moustache, head held high, his sword and spurs clinking as he strode. Like a many-coloured avenue of well-grown trees, two rows of uniforms lined our way and too-long, too-loud silver trumpets were being sounded as if for the last Judgment over our heads by too-tall buglers.

The din was tremendous; but William was enjoying himself, and because his enjoyment was contagious, I, too, was enjoying myself as a child revelling in a splendid show.

Too tall to be real were also the white-clad officers who stood rigid like statues behind the red velvet chairs we had finally reached. Bold and upright sat my triumphant kinsman, his field-marshal's staff held like a sceptre on one knee, staring around him with the gaze of a conqueror.

Es ist erreicht! And looking at him, suddenly in some inexplicable way I found myself in sympathy with him. Something rose from my deepest depths, a queer feeling of understanding for all men, good or bad, big or small, imposing or absurd, real or only pretending to be real. I felt a kindly comprehension for this self-satisfied monarch who had achieved an ideal.

He was splendid in his own showy way, but to me, at least, also somewhat pathetic, as all human creatures are pathetic in their eternal pursuit of an ideal which generally retreats as they advance.

But at that hour William had *achieved*; he personified that which he desired, and I felt towards him somewhat as I had felt in former days towards my small son when he considered himself a conqueror because he was brandishing a toy sword. Luckily there are hours when occasionally some man touches his ideal, be it only for a fleeting instant. I could feel at that moment in my very bones William's proud content, and because of this I was able to rejoice with him. In his own special, spectacular way, at that time Kaiser Wilhelm *was* a success.

Let those who do not care to understand what I mean, smile ironically, but some perhaps will *feel* what I have tried to say. . . .

The contrast between Berlin and Tsarskoye Selo was great.

Here we had reached another world; the world Nicolas II, and Alex-

andra his ill-fated empress, had created for themselves as the years advanced. Not in sympathy with the outward world, they had almost entirely shut themselves off from society and even from their own kith and kin.

The outward pomp and show of power was still there, glittering palaces, guard-regiments, wild-looking Cossacks on constant patrol. But all this ended at the front door, and stepping over the threshold you entered suddenly into a quiet family life, uniform, exclusive and rather dull: father, mother, son and daughters, sufficient unto themselves.

Strongly attached since childhood's days to my mother's people, I arrived at Tsarskoye full of eager anticipations, though neither my husband nor my son joined in my elation.

Nicky was as I had always remembered him, welcoming, sympathetic, full of quiet charm. There was something mild, gentle, somewhat hushed about him and his eyes had a kind, almost a loving look. His voice was low, caressing, a little muffled, and he always seemed glad to see you. From Nicky one never felt estranged, but neither did one get any nearer. He seemed to live in a sort of imperial mist.

With Alix it was different. There had always been something strained about her. I thought that perhaps this attitude was reserved for me personally, but I soon discovered that I was no exception; she behaved almost identically to most of her relations. She had no warm feeling for any of us and this was of course strongly felt in her attitude, which was never welcoming. Some of this was no doubt owing to shyness, but the way she closed her narrow lips after the first rather forced greeting, gave you the feeling that this was all she was ready to concede and that she was finished with you then and there. Because of this it was very difficult either to start or keep up a conversation.

She managed to put an insuperable distance between her world and yours, her experiences and yours, her thoughts, her opinions, her principles, rights and privileges. She made you, in fact, feel an intruding outsider, which is of all sensations the most chilling and uncomfortable.

The pinched, unwilling, patronizing smile with which she received all you said as if it were not worth while answering, was one of the most disheartening impressions I ever received. When she talked, it was almost in a whisper and hardly moving her lips as though it were too

much trouble to pronounce a word aloud. Although there was little difference in age between us, she had a way of making me feel as though I were not even grown up!

Nothing was more depressing than sitting at her table. She never tasted any of the food put before others and had separate dishes served for herself, cooked with monastic simplicity.

Nicky and his children, on the contrary, had healthy appetites and he liked to see me enjoy all the dishes I had delighted in as a child, including the uniquely excellent court sweets.

The Imperial couple lived so entirely for themselves, shut away from the outside world, that, although my mother and sister were both at St. Petersburg, neither of our hosts ever thought of inviting them whilst we were there. In former days the Imperial Family had come together on all occasions, and I found it difficult to get accustomed to this new order of things.

Much had changed in Russia and a feeling of dissatisfaction lay over all things. Tsarskoye Selo seemed to sleep, but beneath that sleep lay something uncanny which we sensed without being able to explain it.

But Ducky, when she came to me, told me many things, and then Mamma and also all the other members of the family, and little by little I understood that Tsarskoye Selo was looked upon as a sick man refusing every doctor and every help. And it was always Alix's name which was mentioned as the chief stumbling-block.

And of course also the name of Rasputin was on every lip.

I liked the girls, they were natural, gay, pleasant and quite confidential with me when their mother was not present; when she was there they always seemed to be watching her every expression so as to be sure to act according to her desires.

I studied each of them in turns. Olga was not pretty, her face was too broad, her cheek-bones too high, but I liked her open, somewhat brusque way. Tatiana was taller and more handsome, but also more reserved. It is said that she was most like her mother in character and that there was a special understanding between them.

Marie was shorter and plumper; she had very fine eyes and a pleasant expression, but a too broad mouth somewhat marred an otherwise pleasing face. I was not much attracted to Anastasia, she had no particular

sort of face, and I do not know why, but I would have said that she was rather shy and watchful. But this may have been only an impression. I was never with them long enough really to know them intimately.

Neither Carol nor Olga showed any sort of desire towards becoming more closely acquainted and I felt rather shy about this part of our "mission," as I understood that by the general public, who longed to see one of their grand duchesses marry a future heir to a throne, something was expected of us. But in this closed palace atmosphere, where nothing was discussed and from which the outer world seemed so carefully excluded, it was a problem how to bring about a conversation leading up to personal topics.

However, I felt it was necessary to have a talk with Alix. Having discussed the marriage plan with my husband, we decided that it might appear rude if we left without having made the advances politically desired, as it is generally considered proper for the young man to do the proposing.

One day, therefore, after lunch, I asked if I could see Alix alone, so she took me into her boudoir and there I very frankly told her I was at a loss to know what to do.

In all fairness towards Alix, I must say that on this occasion she did not make conversation difficult and talked very quietly, like a reasonable mother.

We agreed with each other that neither of us could make any promises in the name of our children, that they must decide for themselves. The only thing we could do would be to create occasions when they could meet, which would certainly not be easy as our lives were lived so far apart. Alix was as pleasant as was possible for her, but I quite realized that these "occasions" for meeting would never come about, as it did not in the least look as though our son or their daughter were attracted to each other, nor were we either of us the sort of parents who would press marriage upon our children if they felt any distaste.

Smilingly we agreed that we felt entirely incapable of influencing Fate, that, in fact, we had no idea how such things were done. At that hour we were simply two mothers, mutually relieved that we "had had it out." I felt that I had done my duty, the rest was in the hands of Fate.

I much preferred the company of the girls to that of their mother. They considered me "a good sport" and I remember putting on high rubber boots and splashing with them through melting snow. They took me for walks in the park and also to see a beautiful church their parents had helped to build close by, for the garrison, I believe. I adored this church, Feodorowski Sobor; it was a veritable enchantment to me. It was Russian at its most Russian and mystic, and my mother's blood made me strangely responsive to this style, or was it purely my love of art? I cannot say, but with difficulty I tore myself away from this mellow-tinted and mysterious house of prayer. The girls were delighted to witness my appreciation, as they were very proud of this lovely building so full of holy treasures.

Being still in deep mourning for my husband's mother, we were unable to take part in any social festivities though the whole of St. Petersburg opened wide its arms to us; but there was a parade in honour of the Crown Prince of Roumania on the vast square before the Winter Palace, and once, seated behind Nicky in his box near the stage, so that I could see without being seen, I witnessed one of the celebrated Russian ballets at the court theatre.

The Tsar appeared now very rarely in his capital, and the Empress, almost a confirmed invalid, hardly ever went with him; he was therefore generally accompanied by his two eldest daughters. The public was still very loyal and I was deeply impressed when the whole house rose like one man at the entrance of their Sovereign and the entire public, high and low, struck up in chorus the National Anthem, of all anthems the most solemn and thrilling. Sung thus by several hundred voices it sent a tremor right through you and made your heart beat.

During the *entr'actes* many members of the Imperial Family flocked together to greet the Emperor and his guests. I was delighted to see my different relations again and also to make the acquaintance of several young cousins who had grown up since I had last been in Russia. There seemed to be a whole flock of them.

Of course, we also politely made our round of family visits, in the first place to Aunt Minnie, the Dowager Empress, with whom my mother was living, and to smart and amiable Aunt Miechen, now a widow since Uncle Vladimir's death a few years previously, but still

keeping open house, receiving all manner of interesting people; and above all it was a delight to go to Ducky's house, which she had arranged beautifully and which was filled with innumerable treasures, amongst others a superb collection of jade.

Ducky had perfect taste and the same passion as I have for arranging her rooms in a rather unusual and uncommon way. But she complained of the want of light and of the endlessness of the St. Petersburg winters, where the days are so cruelly short.

Her two little girls, Marie (called Mashka) and Kira, were two splendid children, well-grown, solid, with lovely hair and perfect skin and as superlatively groomed as English ponies. They had everything on earth of which human children could dream and were flatteringly glad to have me in their midst.

Finally we took leave of Tsarskoye Selo. I was sad to say good-bye to Nicky; a unique and not easily definable charm emanated from this quiet, almost inconspicuous little man who was the last Tsar of all the Russias. I can never think of him without emotion; he deserved a better fate.

To part from Alix was not difficult, she made leave-taking quite easy. Her life was like a closed chamber, peopled with strange imaginations and still stranger individuals, into which no outsider had entry. No fiery sword at the gates of the Garden of Eden could have been more forbidding than her tight-lipped smile which brought two unwilling dimples to her cheeks, dimples completely out of place in so austere a face. No, it was no grief to leave Alix. . . .

We spent a few more pleasant days at St. Petersburg in Aunt Miechen's hospitable house, seeing all those who had not dared approach Tsarskoye's solitude, had not dared intrude into that mysterious centre where somewhere in the shade Rasputin held his fatal sway: I never saw Rasputin.

And then we left and returned home.

I have not as yet spoken about my writing. It began thus:

Even as a child I possessed a vivid imagination and I liked telling stories to my sisters, when at night we all three lay in our small beds, side by side. Later it was to my children that I told my stories, and as I ripened the stories ripened with me and even my growing up children

liked to listen. Out of the wealth of the visions that floated before my brain, I built up my tales. They were nearly always fantastic and my imagination was so vivid that I could conjure up marvellous places and wonderful people, sometimes heroic, sometimes grotesque or funny, and their lives were a mixture of pathos and absurdity, but through it all ran a strong strain of idealism, a touch of the romantic.

Beauty played a great part. Beauty in every form attracted me, and so distinctly did I see what I was relating that I made my listeners wander with me through marvellous castles and gardens, through waste lands and up high mountains, upon lone sea-shores, also to terrible places where the four winds met. Then one of my children said to me: "Mamma, you ought to write all this down, it is a pity to allow so many beautiful pictures to fade away; you ought to hold them fast, there are few who can make others follow them into such strange and prodigious worlds; you are made for writing fairy-tales." Fairy-tales! There was magic in the word. I had always loved fairy-tales, legends and old ballads, the queerer, the more uncanny, the better. I loved the Scotch and Scandinavian Sagas and all the heroic romantic tales of the past. Fairy-tales, legends. . . .

I closed my eyes and saw all the manifold people of my imagination stirring before me, all the colours, all the flowers, all the beauty; there was no end to them, it was a tremendous store of wealth, inexhaustible, endless. . . .

So I began to write fairy-tales. They were not wonderful literature; I knew nothing whatever about writing, about style or composition, or about the "rules of the game," but I did know how to conjure up beauty, also at times, emotion. I also had a vast store of words.

Carmen Sylva, when she discovered that I was writing, instead of laughing at me and being ironical about my modest attempts at literature, encouraged me from the very first in every way. She was getting old, her imagination was running dry and she declared that mine had come just in time to replace hers, which was a generous thing to say. She declared that it was a happy and blessed discovery that I could hold a pen, and no end of kind and enthusiastic things. She spurred me on to write, and each time I had finished a story she immediately wanted to have it so as to translate it into German.

She assured me that, although hers had been rich, I had a larger

vocabulary than she ever had, that I saw beauty in a special and particularly intense way, and much else which made me glad and proud, although I knew that Auntie was too easily enthusiastic and not always a keen discernor as to the value of things.

"Child, child!" she used to exclaim. "How do you know so much? I never dreamt that you knew so much!"

Neither had I ever dreamt that I knew so much; I suppose the subconscious within me had continually absorbed those many things I seemed to pass by without noticing: sights, feelings, emotions, pictures, human passions, human joys, human griefs, also a certain philosophy which comes with living. This was all stored up and stirred in me somewhere and came to life when I put pen to paper, and above all there was beauty, so much beauty everywhere, in every form; it was all mine if I could seize it.

At first I imagined that I could write nothing but fairy-tales, that I must continually describe the fantastic, the superhuman, in unreal worlds of imagination: mould picture upon picture out of nothing but beauty. I was moved by a regular thirst for beauty. And yet with it there was always that queer feeling of never being able to take myself seriously which was mine all through my youth and which now still clung to me when I wrote: "I do not want to pretend to know more than I do, to pretend to be anything else than what I am," were the thoughts that hampered my development. "I do not want to show off or to take anything for myself to which I have no real right, nothing by false means, ever. . . . Rather be considered beneath my own value than above it, no pretending, no shams. . . ."

But one day I discovered that I could describe, depict, a landscape, a village, a sunset, a dusty road; that I could with ease conjure up also visions of everyday places, of everyday people; everything picturesque attracted me. I felt the atmosphere, the pathos, that something which lies beneath what is merely seen by the eye, I felt it all, and whilst I wrote I understood that this had come to me little by little through my growing love for my adopted country. I realized how deeply I had absorbed the beauties, the characteristics, the quaintness peculiar to Roumania, and I knew that I should be able to describe it one day—and that knowledge made me feel strong and rich.

I was still extremely hesitant about what form, what style was going

to be mine; the weird had a too great attraction for me, and I was so unlearned, but the visions, pictures, emotions, sensations were all there, lying within me ready to be born.

So I simply went on writing, humbly, without any pretensions, because, having begun I could not lay down my pen. That is all there was about it, an inner urge not to be denied; but strangely enough I felt almost ashamed as though I were somewhat of a fraud . . . a little girl pretending; still that silly fear of taking myself too seriously.

The fear of taking myself too seriously! And suddenly the seriousness of life rose up and was there, not to be denied, not to be put aside; reality, not dreams, dark events which were to overthrow the peace of the world.

But there is still one sunny day I must describe, a day of satisfaction, a festive day:

Constantza, our sea-port; and we were all come together to receive the Tsar and his wife and children, coming from the Crimea to pay old King Carol a visit, come to wipe out the old offence which had so festered since 1877-8; come to accentuate the growing understanding between Russia and Roumania.

In June it was, and all the roses were a-bloom; the Black Sea was blue and the small white town had decked itself in flags and there was a bustling excitement in the usually quiet streets. Flags everywhere, waving from every housetop, from every lamp-post, from every ship, gay new flags full of colour undulating in the breeze against a sky so azure blue that it was as though it had been specially painted for the occasion, a sky for happy days.

We were all assembled on the terrace of Aunty's little house and beneath us along the quay were eager, fussing authorities, guards of honour, many uniforms, military music and bunting galore; and Aunty's too long flowing gown was whiter than the foam of the sea.

All my children were there, even little Mircea, and Ileana, always aware of what she owed to the world, arrayed in her best dress, was solemnly prepared to take particular care of Alexis, the little Tsarevitch, who was only a year older than herself.

Uncle showed signs of emotion, for this was a great day for him. No



GRAND DUCHESS KIRILL ("DUCKY") WITH HER DAUGHTERS, MARIE
AND KIRA



UNCLE AND AUNTY IN THEIR OLD AGE

reigning sovereign had visited him since the celebrated coming of Franz Joseph so many years ago.

What may have been his thoughts, looking back upon the long way he had travelled? An arduous road lay behind him, but he had done good work, he **had** made his country flourish and it now stood well to the fore, free, no more to be ignored; he had been patient, consistent, he had shown no weakness; even if his people did not love him very warmly, they respected him and were conscious of what a good, steady and unselfish leader he had been.

To-day he was evidently pleased and was rather unusually affectionate to me as these were my relations coming to us from over the sea, and he looked to me to be the binding link, to make things comfortable, pleasant. I felt this and was eager to meet him half-way.

And there, painted faintly against the sky-line, the silhouettes of several ships. We raised our hands to shade our eyes; yes! those were the Russian boats! The movements of the crowd on the quays beneath us became convulsive, the troops lined up straightened themselves instinctively, the old generals pulled down their tunics, smoothed their *grands cordons* and those in black evening garb kept brushing real or imaginary dust from off their sleeves. Everything was emotion and commotion, and a tremor seemed to run even through the flags.

The ships grew in size and from amongst them the Imperial yacht could be clearly distinguished. Nearer and nearer they came; now they were steaming into the harbour and the bands suddenly struck up the Russian National Anthem, always connected in my mind with my mother, filling me therefore with deep emotion. And then the *Standard* was close up against the quay, a noble vessel indeed, worthy of bearing an emperor over the blue.

Gangways were lowered and Uncle and Aunt advanced to meet their guests; Uncle somewhat stiffly with his characteristic slow dignity but almost trembling with emotion, Aunt effusive, charming words of welcome flowing easily from her lips.

They greeted first the Emperor, then the Empress, who was making brave efforts to be as gracious as possible, but it did not come easily to her and her face was very flushed. Her four daughters followed close on her heels, cheerful-looking and exceedingly sunburnt from their stay

in the Crimea. We were pleased to see each other again, having become quite friendly during my visit to Tsarskoye. They were very simple girls, ready to enjoy everything, unaffected and natural but not dressed to their advantage, so that the Roumanians, very critical as to looks and clothes, did not much admire them.

Ileana, too small to be conspicuous, was in vain stretching out her little hand to each arrival, but could draw no attention to herself till at last Alexis appeared, upon which she immediately seized hold of him and from then on devoted herself entirely to him, which the very handsome but somewhat spoilt child accepted with perfect good grace. They got on together from the very first, almost without any shyness. Ileana was always eager to make others happy, even as a tiny child.

It was a busy day, every hour mapped out. The weather was beautiful and the population gave an enthusiastic reception to the Imperial guests.

Our round began with a solemn Te Deum in the Cathedral, arranged with particular pomp and care, Uncle knowing what a great part church played in the lives of the Russian sovereigns; the service was celebrated partly in Roumanian and partly in Russian. A drive through the town for the sake of the population and then a military parade, King Carol himself leading past his troops before the Tsar, who was made chief of one of the Roşiori regiments. A family lunch at Aunt's pavilion and presentation of authorities.

Then a rest was allowed, both Uncle and the Empress being in very poor health, but we all met again for tea on the Imperial yacht where the children had a good time together whilst an excellent band was playing.

The day ended with a huge banquet in a hall specially built for the occasion, a snow-white hall in Roumanian style. I had been consulted by the architect and had seen to it that no gaudy gildings should mar the fine lines and proportions, so that the big festive chamber was in excellent taste and there was nothing but roses on the table.

Alix looked very regal that evening; at times she was still very handsome and Uncle and Aunt had specially delegated me to look after her in every way. Knowing how painfully shy she was, I was near at hand during the many presentations, giving her useful hints as to who the different people were, so that conversation became easier. A *cercle*

amongst quite unknown people is always an ordeal and to Alix this part of her duties was specially painful, but my cheerfulness helped her through the evening and prevented a chilly atmosphere. I felt full of the joy of life, and this is often contagious; there is nothing like wanting people to be happy—one finds then a thousand ways.

Sasonov was one of those who had come with the Sovereigns and I believe important political conversations took place; he certainly must have profited by the occasion to promote his schemes. He and Bratianu seemed on very good terms.

Nicky was charming as ever, and I found myself continually watching him and again it struck me how very lovable he was with his low voice and gentle eyes; how little did I imagine then that we would never meet again.

I for one was sad when the hour for parting came and our guests again took possession of their floating abode, which was once and for all to carry them out of our lives.

Again the solemn anthem sounded, again there were cheers but this time mixed with calls of farewell, and slowly a mighty shadow pierced with light, the *Standard* left her moorings to slip away into the night.

I ran along the pier so as to have a last look at the departing ships, for the *Standard* had rejoined her escort of men-of-war which had been anchored before the entry to the port and all of them were now rapidly steaming away from our shores.

It was a gorgeous night, the heavens a mighty map of stars. For a long time I stood there at the very end of the pier; the ships were now mere specks of light. A lump rose in my throat; the great day was ended, had slipped over into Eternity like so much else. Every sound had died down, there was just a faint swish of the waves and now and again the sound of a bugle, soldiers marching home to their barracks. The night was huge and calm and silent, the ships had now entirely disappeared; like wraiths, populated by wraiths, they had slipped away into the dark. . . .

CHAPTER XXX

SERAJEVO AND AFTER

THE murder of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife in Serajevo on June the 28th came to us, as it did to the rest of the world, as a thunderbolt.

The tension of the month which followed was great. We were all at Sinaia and I had as usual been peacefully planning our yearly visit to Mamma at Tegernsee. Carol was still at Potsdam. Now, of course, all plans had to be laid aside.

A common feeling of anxiety gave us a desire to huddle close together, like animals when they sense that a storm is rising. Uncle especially seemed to need our company, so we met several times a day, not counting the meals which were taken together.

It was lovely weather and Uncle liked to stroll about with us on his terraces or the paths near the castle. He had become very frail and could no longer indulge in the long walks through his beloved forest, which used to be his chief pleasure. Now he stooped somewhat from the shoulders and by the cautious way he moved, it could easily be guessed that he was often in pain.

I vividly remember the anxious expression of his emaciated face which had taken on the colour of old wax, as almost hour for hour he followed up the development of events, and how careworn he looked when he realized that the hope of a peaceful solution of the Austro-Serbian conflicts became less and less.

And then suddenly, exactly a month from the day of the murder at Serajevo, after many fluctuations, the die was cast, and it was war! Austria declared war on Serbia on July the 28th.

We looked at each other aghast, conscious of the terrible significance of the hour when the world's peace was torn to shreds. The fuse had been lighted; how far would the fire spread?

And the sad thing came to pass that Uncle and I, who had taken so

many years to become friends, found ourselves, now from the very first, instinctively and irretrievably in different camps.

War-mentality has something very peculiar about it; the spirit of nationality awakes irresistibly in each man or woman; it is almost impossible to remain even moderately neutral. Only those who are highly philosophical or those whose interest it is to play a double game can remain calm or abstract; but most human beings immediately identify themselves solidly with one side or the other. Patriotism becomes rampant.

Aunty, who for years had almost forgotten her nationality, and who at times had done nothing but boom all that was English or French almost to the detriment of things German, suddenly found herself *die Rheintochter* (daughter of the Rhine) with a vengeance: it was all the time *Deutschland über Alles, Gott mit uns*, and all the rest of it.

I was told that I must look upon the downfall of England as a certainty; that it was Germany's day, the beginning of the Teuton era, they *must* become lords of the world for the good of humanity. She even said a thing very difficult for me to swallow: she declared that England *had* to fall because her women had become immoral!

Where she had got hold of this notion, I cannot say, but I had to hear it again and again, as Aunty was very persistent when she once got an idea into her head. I avoided arguments, though it was very hard not to answer back, and I was determined not to quarrel if I could possibly help it.

Between Uncle and myself the case was sadder. Our friendship and mutual appreciation of each other, slowly cemented through long, difficult years of conflict, had become dear to us and it was for both a deep though never openly pronounced regret that now, at this late hour (we did not know it was the last), our sympathies separated us once more.

Not violently or with unfriendly words; we were both careful not to hurt each other's feelings, but when he talked and propounded his opinions, he *felt* that I was no more with him. And yet he still had a desire to talk; he had got into the habit of telling me things, and still had an urge to do so, to teach me, to advise, to instruct. We still came often together and I listened; but I was mute.

There was also something else; and that special, almost morbid, faculty I have of feeling for others and understanding their side of

questions as well as my own, even when interests clash, made me understand how bitter it must have been for the old King to realize that, whilst he was gradually falling out of sympathy with his people, *I* was becoming their hope: *I*, the unruly little princess he had educated with such pains, was to-day the country's hope!

To-day nearly the whole of Roumania was straining towards the Entente, away from the Triple Alliance, but Uncle still believed that the good of his country was in the old allegiance.

My husband, always the old King's most loyal follower, his most patient and obedient heir, was a closed book to his people: no one knew what he felt, he never raised his voice, never expressed himself; but the very blood that ran in my veins was a guarantee that I felt as Roumania felt.

I look upon this as a supreme favour of Fate. Even to this day I feel like falling on my knees and thanking God for that stupendous stroke of luck. At the Great Hour my country and I were one.

This might so easily have been otherwise, and, passionate as I am, how should I have stood a conflict which would have torn me in two, a conflict which King Ferdinand had later to face? This remains an unanswered question; luckily it never needed an answer!

All through life I have instinctively believed in my good star, and now at this crucial hour Providence, in her mercy, decreed that Roumania and I should stand for the same thing!

There are some words of Nietzsche's which come to my mind when I think back upon all this, and I cannot resist quoting them here; some will perhaps understand me.

I love the one who is ashamed to see the die fall in his favour and who then asks of himself: perchance might I be a cheat?

No, I was no cheat, but luck had favoured me beyond my deserts!

Austria had declared war on Serbia on July the 28th, and Germany and France opened hostilities on the 1st-2nd of August, although there was no actual declaration of war. On the 2nd of August Italy declared her neutrality, and it now became urgent for Roumania to take a stand herself, as her allies were impatient and disagreeably pressing; telegrams were flying backwards and forwards between Berlin, Vienna and

Bucarest, so on August the 3rd King Carol called together a Crown Council at Sinaia with all the responsible representatives of both parties, the Liberals (in power) and the Conservatives, so as to consult with them as to what attitude our country should take. The Crown Prince was of course present.

This was a tragic and memorable sitting. Uncle, true to his allegiance, in spite of the slights he had suffered at the hands of his allies, was ready to see Roumania enter in on the side of Austria and Germany, although he had no absolute obligation, his treaty being only a defensive one. But Uncle was convinced that Roumania's chance was on the side of the Central Powers and stuck to this, although Italy had already backed out on the pretext that she had not been consulted and was therefore liberated from her obligations, and Roumania's case was the same.

To make his attitude clear it must be understood that Uncle had blind confidence in the German army's superiority over every other army. He never had much belief in the French and imagined that the Germans would continue to advance with lightning rapidity, sweeping all before them; that it would, in fact, be a repetition of 1870. He therefore had visions of Roumania sharing in an overwhelming German victory and this explains why he desired Roumania to declare herself from the first for the Central Powers. My husband, I believe, was of the same opinion, but he told me nothing; Nando could be exceedingly silent, and, unlike most women, I never tried to find out those things men did not wish to share with their wives.

Poor old Uncle, it seems, stood up with all his well-known authority, unshakably loyal to the politics he had always followed, full of a passionate desire for his country's welfare; now a frail, suffering old gentleman, but a soldier still, accustomed to be a leader, accustomed to have his word listened to. But to-day he could not move those who sat round the same table with him; he remained alone with his convictions; they listened, but were mostly hostile to his urging and out of sympathy with his desires. Only one, Peter Carp, of all his political men, the one with whom he had always been least in sympathy, was heart and soul with him about entering immediately into war on the side of the Germans. Bratianu and his party opposed this and most virulent in their protest were Take Ionescu and his followers.

Poor old Aunty passed through terrible anxiety whilst her ailing husband sat through that harrowing council. Though she hated war, she saw eye to eye with him as to his belief in Germany's omnipotence.

I found her pacing the Peleş corridors, up and down, over the soft red carpets, like a great animal in a cage. She swept me along with her and talked and talked incessantly. I was silent, but my heart was beating as much as hers in excruciating anxiety. Although I knew the country's pulse, the issue was still uncertain and it was incredibly painful to be pacing thus arm in arm with Aunty, each of us with a separate fear or hope in our hearts.

Roumania was to remain neutral! This was the result of the conference. When the result was known and Uncle had come out of it a broken and saddened man, Aunty, of course, became dramatic, and, as was her way, almost revelled in the grand tragedy of the situation: the old King denied by his people after a long life of hard work for his country.

Legend will have it that Uncle died of a broken heart. I do not know if hearts actually break, but it was certainly tragic that he should be at odds with his people at the last, and I really believe that this grief hastened his end.

The following months were sad for us all, and heavy with unexpressed emotions throbbing beneath the outward calm of our Sinaia life.

The tremendous events taking place in Serbia, France, Belgium, Russia and Germany were followed up by everyone with excruciating anxiety, and the cruel strain of contrary currents could be felt in all things beneath the outward harmony of our official existence. Each man was hugging to himself his own hopes and fears, accepting as truth all news most in keeping with his sympathies. What was triumph to the one was grief to the other, but we managed to discuss things with outward calm so as not to hurt each other's feelings too much.

Only Aunty, accustomed to argue on all subjects, could not leave well alone and tried our nerves by stirring up dogs best left sleeping. Her conversation at lunch was not always tactful. She kept loudly proclaiming that Uncle ought to shake the dust of this ungrateful country from his feet and go and rest in peace far from all conflict. Uncle visibly writhed under the things she said during meals, as all ears were more than ever keenly open. Underlying passions could only be kept

dormant with superlative tact on all sides and a mutual desire to be gentle and kind to each other, no matter if our sympathies were running along in divided channels.

But this notion that perhaps Uncle meant to abdicate had taken root and sent a shudder through the country, which was afraid to lose its dynasty at the crucial hour.

I was not initiated into what was actually being discussed between uncle and nephew, and I was one of those whose anxiety was most poignant.

I have just proclaimed that I had no feminine curiosity and that I never tried to make my husband speak when he desired to be dumb, but this was not only a political question, it meant our very existence. What understanding had the King and Crown Prince which I was not to know?

If Uncle abdicated, would he persuade my husband to do the same? Would it mean that, after the long, difficult, sometimes even bitter, years of hard work and education, now that my life, interests and loyalty had really sent roots deep down into Roumanian soil, I was to be torn away just at the hour when our people might really need me? How could I to-day stand this awful fear without trying to make my husband confess if he had made any fatal promise?

But he was dumb, cruelly dumb; nothing would induce him to give me a hint about what secret understanding he had with his uncle, of what they were preparing for us, over our heads, without consulting our feelings or allowing us to raise any protest.

I felt a deep current of anxiety stirring around us: people began to come to me, trying to find out what was going on. Finally, unable to stand the strain, I sent for Prince Stirbey, now in old Kalinderu's place, and asked him if he knew anything definite.

No, he had not been told nor consulted: he, too, was anxious, but he could neither confirm nor abate my fears.

So as to give a better idea than anything I could write to-day of the feelings which tortured me then, I here copy a page out of my book, "From my Heart to Theirs," written at that time but never published, which is this:

My love for this Country that I had made mine through sighs and tears has become as a religion to me.

I feel bound to it by chains of steel, bound by heart and brain and blood. I feel that every one of the six children I have borne to it are so many links of this chain that death only or catastrophe can break.

I remember how one day I was riding with my second son, a small boy with fair hair and keen, happy eyes, the colour of the sky. He was astride a snow-white pony, a turbulent, fiery little creature which bounded along before me like a stag.

We were galloping over some wide, flower-strewn meadows, in places peasants were mowing the hay and its fragrance mounted like incense into the balmy air; as a background, mountains, grand, silent, eternal in their beauty.

I pulled up my horse to watch the child circle hither and thither on his pony whose long tail swept like a puff of smoke over the grass.

It was at the beginning of the great European war and there had been talk of the old King's abdication owing to some vital divergence of opinion between himself and his people, and it had been whispered that we, the younger generation whose lives still lay before us, would have to follow him into exile if he decided to leave. My whole being was up in arms against such a thought, all the fighter within me was prepared to frustrate this plan.

What! Be obliged to leave this country which had become mine at last, into whose heart I had so slowly but surely crept? What! Leave this people who were beginning to trust me and to look upon me as their dawning hope: leave my work, my future, the sacred right of being buried in Roumanian ground? Oh! never, never! Such a thing must not be!

And gazing at the bold little rider on his snow-white pony, I knew that I had borne him with the thought that he belonged to this country and this country to him.

The joy of life running through him which made him throw back his head and laugh to the heavens above, was in intimate connexion with the fields and mountains, with the forests, plains and rivers of this land which was his. Every drop of blood in his veins linked him to the ground over which he was galloping; he could never be at home in any other country; this was his heritage, his right. . . .

And I knew at that moment, knew it with a rock-like certainty, that, even if others could be persuaded to leave, I for one would cling to this soil with my children, and to tear us from it would be to tear the hearts out of our bodies.

People sensed that this was my feeling and one day old Mr. Costinescu, one of the important Liberal leaders, came to implore me not to allow anybody or anything to separate me from this country, no matter what others might decide: "Even if the Prince, your husband, feels

bound to follow his uncle into self-imposed exile, promise that you will remain with us with your son Carol, if possible with all your children, remain to carry on the work begun by the old King; it is not possible nor fair that you should forsake us at this crisis when we know you are with us with all your heart. . . .”

And of course I promised. Filled by an almost painful fervour I promised that nothing would induce me to abandon my people as long as they needed me, no, not even if it would mean the tearing asunder of family ties.

At that period, all things were pressing in upon me with overwhelming intensity. I was terribly awake to the times. A thousand forces were stirring within me, I seemed to be newly and tremendously alive and a great desire to live up to my possibilities, never yet put to the test, was born within me.

In the same unpublished book I find this passage characteristic of my emotions of that time, when I felt my strength growing, so I copy out my own words, as to-day I could hardly find that same enthusiasm or that blind urge impelling me towards life, towards the fulfilment of my own possibilities which was mounting as a strong tide within me and which would enable me to face any fate. I wrote thus:

It is strange how the human soul gradually accepts the changes and transformations life imposes upon us.

The strong go forward, permitting no regrets, no recriminations, no remorse to hinder their advance.

Each succeeding year tears from me some desire, some belief, some hopeful illusion, but in shedding much which was dear, an inner strength grows within me and becomes as a shield protecting me against sudden events.

At heart I am lonely; not my life, not my days are lonely, but my soul, that something which makes of me a separate identity. I think that most human beings are lonely, but those whose will does not easily bend to the laws of others are lonelier still.

I feel as though I belong to the strong of this world and I know that I am ready to face both myself and Fate.

I came as a child to this country, a foolish, pliable, clinging, credulous innocent, believing solely in my right to happiness, but life took hold of me and stood me on my feet; it buffeted, mocked and derided me, obliging me to fight my own battles, forcing me to stand upright and alone to make my own laws according to the depth of my own conscience; and at times these laws were at variance with the laws of those who had power over me.

Like all world-wanderers, I have outwardly to submit to each day's tyranny, but inwardly I have become what I wish to be. No one and nothing can turn me from the ideal which gives me strength nor from the faith which makes me forgive Life and the uncharitableness of my neighbour.

Love lives in my heart, invincibly, a light nothing can obscure, neither disappointment nor disillusionment, nor even the mistrust and misunderstanding of mankind. The inner faith by which I go forward is stronger than all else; invincible, invulnerable, not to be overthrown; it has become an armour which protects me from the snares of existence.

And because of this Faith, this Belief, all those who really count in my life, give me the best which they have to give.

The light of my Faith leads them, they are glad to follow me, they are glad to be mine.

No heart-rending experience, no conflict, no defeat, no surrender leaves any bitterness in my soul. All that I have endured, submitted to, all that has either gladdened or saddened my days seems but to strengthen that light, nor do I ever feel any desire to hit back at those who harm me, my one and only wish is that they should understand the sad unfruitfulness of all hate.

I do not look despisingly upon the girl I once was, but I rejoice over the armour she has grown over her weakness, nor do I regret any single trial which came to her along the way; all her dead dreams, all her falls, all her tears and yearning have helped to build up the woman she is to-day.

Yes, I am lonely, but with the loneliness and the pride of the strong, of those who would rather lead than follow!

What a youthful ring of arrogance there is in this confession! To-day I would never dare write such words, but strength had come with the growing confidence of my people, and I felt this strength and rejoiced over it, as the young warrior rejoices over his sword. I felt prepared for all that would be asked of me, equipped for the battle that lay before me; I was not afraid—on the contrary, a strange elation possessed me and with it the certainty that I was ready for the great call that was coming, for it *was* coming; I felt it in every drop of my blood; only, I did not know that it was to come so soon!

The battle of the Marne was a terrible blow to Uncle, it shook his most precious beliefs. He stood aghast before this unexpected turn of events; as a German he was overwhelmed, but as a soldier he was keenly interested in this great war-game so different from any he had known in his day. In spite of personal sympathies, he could detach himself enough to discuss events with quiet objectivity, and conversation at

meals was therefore both animated and interesting and not at all one-sided.

I remember how one day at lunch Aunty was becoming lyrical over the horror of the world in general and how in her uncomfortably poetic exuberance she began proclaiming loudly that we should all join hands and in a mighty circle sail up to Heaven, away from the miseries of this darkened sphere.

Uncle grunted his royal disapproval with his usual "Das ist Unsinn, Elisabeth," the words we so often heard when he wanted to damp the old Queen's effusiveness. "Nonsense, I have no desire to leave this earth, at present I am far too interested as to the outcome of the War, I want to see the end," and turning to me he added: "With this new development things have taken, I am afraid we cannot hope for peace before Christmas."

Before Christmas . . . and there were to be four Christmases before we saw peace . . . but there was to be no Christmas for Uncle any more.

Nor was Uncle destined to see how the War ended, however interested he might be! Uncle died in the night of the 9th to the 10th of October, quite suddenly in his bed.

It happened that my husband and I were absent from Sinaia just that very night, a rare occurrence, as we seldom went to town at that season. But it had been considered good policy that the Prince and I should show ourselves in Bucarest so that, with our appearance in the capital, the rumours that we were all going away should be denied.

It had been found advisable that we should be present at the autumn races, where the public with its thousand eyes could see that we were both there in flesh and blood.

Nando was to spend the night at Cotroceni, but I had promised to go and sup with Marthe Bibescu at Mogoșoaia and sleep in her house, returning only next morning with my husband to Sinaia.

Early on the morning of the 10th Prince Stirbey called me to the telephone to tell me that I was Queen. . . .

I have often been asked since, what were my emotions when this event took place, and each time I answered with perfect truthfulness that it was one of the most tremendous and overwhelming emotions of my life.

I had always faced the fact that, sooner or later, inevitably this must come about; mentally I had been preparing myself for it, but when it actually came it was a colossal shock.

I was quite conscious of what an enormous responsibility it meant, especially because of the times we were living in and of the extreme seriousness of the general situation in Europe, and our country in particular. We were facing a new political era, and every move, every decision would be of paramount importance.

It was a solemn moment, but I felt no fear although it was as though suddenly a new door had opened upon life. We were standing on the threshold; what should we find beyond?

I was the same woman as yesterday, but to-morrow was separated from yesterday as with the stroke of a sword; there would never be any going back, no shelter could be found, we were out in the glaring light. Something had died, but in that dying something else had come to life; a colossal responsibility but also colossal possibilities if we were equal to our task, if we were strong enough to grasp the day which was coming. And on a golden bowl I gave my husband at that time I had these words inscribed: "To-morrow may be thine if thy hand be strong enough to grasp it."

Yes, it was thus I felt at that hour, and when I knelt beside the old King's bed and gazed for the last time upon his face, scarcely paler than it had been during the last few weeks of his life, so unchanged and yet so calm, so nobly aloof in his new-found, well-earned rest, I felt as though with mute lips I must take my vows before his great silence.

"Have no fear, Uncle, we shall bravely carry on. Your hand was heavy, often you tortured my youth, but according to your lights you were fair and just. I shall not forget the lessons you taught me although I was so slow about learning and growing up; and here, kneeling beside you, though to-day you are dumb and have no more orders to give me, I feel that you still have a message for me, your once so troublesome niece: yes, Uncle, I shall try to be, as you were, faithful unto death, loving your country as you did for so many long years. If God wills, bravely and fearlessly we shall carry on your work.—Amen."

Aunty, seated in a chair at her husband's side, all draped in black and surrounded by many weeping ladies, was more full of words than ever. Over and over again she related how he had died quite suddenly in

her arms, and she, groping in the dark, not able to find the switch to put on the light. A wonderful death for him, but for her a fearful shock.

My children were grouped around her and Nando held her hand, but Uncle was quite silent, his day was done.

All the details belonging to this time, although deeply engraved on my memory, are too trivial to relate at length. I prefer quoting a passage out of my book written at the time; it sums up everything in a single picture and better than any other words recaptures the spirit of the day. This is what I wrote:

In turning over the last of these pages, I enclose within them the days of my youth.

Days of struggle, days of illusion, days of disappointment, days of reparation, days of doubting, days of recommencement, days of love, days of revolt . . . days of my youth.

Days of storm or of sunshine, days of accomplishment which sometimes came too late. Days rich with possibilities, days made heavy by fear and doubt, days full of sunshine, flowers and hope, days pulsing with joy or pain, days full to the brim, warm, marvellous, teeming with life and energy . . . days of my youth.

Days when I trembled and days when I laughed, days when all things seemed possible, days when every step was an effort but also days when my feet flew as though winged over the earth. . . . Days of my youth. . . .

And here is a picture which has remained for ever engraved upon my heart.

That morning I had become Queen, Queen of a people who had learnt to understand me little by little: Queen at a moment when the whole of Europe was on fire and flames were licking our every frontier. I was Queen; a new and fearful page was opening before me, solemn with unknown possibilities, heavy with unknown fears.

We were standing in Parliament, the new King was taking his oath before his people. The old master had passed away and the new one with all his hopes and theirs stood before them on the brink of a new life; he was neither loved nor unloved, he was a closed book; no one knew his thoughts, but he might be as the dawn of something greater, might become the fulfiller of a long-dreamed-of dream.

I stood somewhat apart, with my children around me, a long black

mourning veil covering my face. My heart-beats were as the feet of Fate.

I hardly heard the King's voice, nor his words, but I heard how they acclaimed him, their King of to-morrow, a long thunder of applause rolled round the walls.

Then suddenly my name ran through space :

"Regina Maria. . . ."

"Regina Maria. . . ."

And there was something in the way they called out my name that had within it a sound of hope.

"Regina Maria! . . ."

I suddenly felt that I must bare my face before the whole house, that I must turn towards them with no veil of mourning between them and myself.

A great clamour mounted to the vault above, something long drawn out and tremendous that came irresistibly from many hearts!

"Regina Maria!"

And we faced each other then, my people and I.

And that was *my* hour—mine—an hour it is not given to many to live; for at that moment it was not only an idea, not only a tradition or a symbol they were acclaiming, but a woman; a woman they loved.

And at that hour I knew that I had won, that the stranger, the girl who had come from over the seas, was a stranger no more; I was theirs with every drop of my blood!

Disappointment, sorrow, misfortune might follow, for are we not all in the hands of God? But that hour when we stood looking into each other's eyes, all their many faces turned towards my face, was my hour, and it is therefore upon this vision that I want to close this book, the vision of my people turning towards me as though I were their supremest hope. . . .

MARIE.

COTROCENI,

November, 1933.

INDEX

INDEX

A

- Abbazia, 405
 Abergeldie Maines, 66
 Admiralty House, Devonport, 192, 195
 Adrianople, fall of, 550
 Adukiowitzch, 488
 Agapia, convent of, 424
Aida, 170
 Alba, Duchess of, 121, 122
 Alba, Duke of, 121, 122
 Albania, 542-3
 Albert, King of the Belgians, 261, 262, 263
 Albert, Prince Consort, 47, 153, 296; portraits of, 19
 Alençon, Duchess of, 221
 Alexander II, Emperor of Russia, 3, 342; author's memories of, 79, 80, 81; assassination of, 80, 197; tomb of, 197; and Russian Constitution, 197; and Protestant marriages, 200
 Alexander III, Emperor of Russia (Uncle Sasha), 80, 83, 324; at military review, 89; at church, 90; began era of repression, 197; at funeral of Grand Duchess Alexandra, 197; and Protestant marriages, 200
 Alexandra, Grand Duchess, 339; death of, 196; funeral of, 196-8
 Alexandra, Princess of Wales (Aunt Alix), at Eastwell Park, 6, 7; at Cowes, 38-40; beauty of, 40, 41; photo of, 76
 Alexandra, Queen, of England, and author's painting, 380; coronation of, 459; and husband's illness, 459-60; at Sandringham, 466
Alexandra, H.M.S., 101, 110, 117, 118, 127, 136
Alexandra, Royal Yacht, 38
 Alexandra Victoria, Princess (Sandra), 4, 120; riding lessons of, 61; her character as a child, 64; at Birkhall, 66; on voyage to Malta, 96; as owner of Tommy, 99, 102; over-ruled by her sisters, 105; her tenth birthday, 116; at the dentist, 118; at Rosenau, 149; her education at Coburg, 158; journeys with her mother, 165; and Gretchen, 180; her parting from author, 269; arrival of, in Roumania, 313; and Prince Carol, 324; at Sinaia, 325; and King Carol, 324; marriage of, 325, 326; at Gotha Schloss, 404; at Fürstenstein, 471; at Langenburg, 527
 Alexandre, 259
 Alexandrina, Princess of Baden, 154
 Alexis, Grand Duke, 82, 85, 404; at author's wedding, 261, 264
 Alexis, Tsarevitch of Russia, 582
 Alfonso, Infante, of Orleans-Bourbon, 457, 545
 Alfonso, King of Spain, 545
 Alfred, Prince, 122, 314; named after father, 3; his French tutor, 32; at Clarence House, 32; at Osborne, 36; his education at Coburg, 47, 143, 183; his birthday, 118; his German tutors, 143, 145, 160; his friends at Coburg, 164, 182, 190; his valet, 175; his death, 175; as a boy, 183; relations with his mother, 185; goes to Sigmaringen, 218; at tea party at "Inzighoven," 221; his liking for King Carol, 263; his parting from author, 269; at Ilinsky, 342; in Roumania, 363, 494; death of, 404, 455
 Alicante, 118
 Alice, Princess (of Hesse), 230, 326
 Allenby, Lieutenant, 110, 111, 127, 128
 Alphonso XII, King of Spain, 118
 Amélie, Queen of Portugal, 43
 Anastasia, 574
 André, Grand Duke, 84
 André, Prince, of Greece, 200
 Andrews, Louise, 278, 286, 296, 302, 317
 Anson (afterwards Admiral), C. E., 110
 Antipa, Dr., 538
 Antonia, Infanta of Portugal, *see* Hohen-zollern, Fürstin Antonia of
 Antonio, Don, Infante of Spain, 122
 Aranjuez, 121
 Archangelsky, 339-40
 Arend, 182
 Argyll, Duchess of, 378
 Arta, 122
 Astor, John, 436
 Astor, Mr., 436
 Astor, Mrs., 436
 Astor, Pauline, 379-80; at Cliveden, 435-7; at Sinaia, 437-9
 Astor, Waldorf, 435; at Cliveden, 435-6; at Sinaia, 437
 Atachino, 382
 August Wilhelm, Prince, of Germany, 480
 Augusta Victoria, Empress of Germany, 205, 209, 474, 479; character of, 203-4

Austria, 214
 Austria, Empress of, 275
 Austria-Hungary, centre of great power, 274; and Roumania, 566, 568; declares war, 584, 586
 Austro-Hungarian Legation, 434-5
 Averescu, General, 530, 550

B

"Baby Bee," *see* Beatrice, Princess
 Back, Eric, 110, 136
 Bad Schwalbach, 451
 Baden, Grand Duchess of, 455
 Baden, Grank Duke of, 455
 Baden, Marussia of, 397
 Baden, Princess of, 217; *see also* Hohenzollern, Fürstin Josephine of
 Balaceanu, Jean, 427
 Balcic, 36
 Balkan War, 544, 549-50; causes of, 549
 Ballplatz, 274
 Balmoral, 19, 68, 233
 Barcelona, 118, 380
 Barrett, Wilson, 62
 Barron, Mrs., 137
 Bassarabescu, Major, 375
 Bayreuth, 172, 457
 Beatrice, Princess (Baby Bee), 4; with Jolly, 30; with Nana Pitschly, 45; musical talent of, 65; on voyage to Malta, 96; as a scholar, 158; her factotum, 174; and Löwel, 182; goes to Sigmaringen, 218; at tea-party at "Inzighoven," 222; her parting from author, 269; arrives in Roumania, 313; and birth of Prince Carol, 316-17; her friendship with Prince Carol, 317; at Sinaia, 390, 392; at Gotha Schloss, 404; at Munich, 456; marriage of, 457; at Esher, 466-7; in Spain, 545
 Beatty, David, 110, 136
 Bechet, 550
 Beck, Professor, 159, 162
 Belaief, 339
 Belgium, 250; and the war, 588
 Belosselsky, Prince, 123
 Benedetti, French ambassador to Prussia, 215
 Bennett, Mrs., 442
 Beppo, 136
 Beppo No. 2, 136
 Berlin, 52, 204, 205, 206, 207, 214, 244, 250, 290, 426, 474, 568
 Bernhardt, Sarah, 350, 367
 Bessarabia, 567
 Bibescu, Georges Valentin, 443
 Bibescu, Marthe, 443-4, 448, 593
 Bibescu, Nadège, *see* Stirbey, Nadège
 Birkhall, 66, 105
 Bismarck, Prince von, 214, 215

Bistrița, 424
 Blériot, 541
 Blundell, Etta, *see* Keppel, Etta
 Blundell, Mrs., 268
 Boabdil, "El Rey Chico," 120
 Bogdan, Colonel, 375
 Bolsheviks, 196
 Boris, Grand Duke, 84
 Bosphorus, 115
 Bourke, Maurice, character of, 111, 112; his influence with author, 112; his letter to author, 113-16; in Turkey, 113-16; in Montenegro, 116-17; in Spain, 118-22; in Russia, 123-4; and disaster to H.M.S. *Victoria*, 125-6; finding Happy Valley, 134; his voyage to Naples, 138; his parting from author, 139; not at Coburg, 169
 Brangescu, Zoe, 538
 Bratianu, Elise, 377, 552
 Bratianu, Ion, the elder, 246
 Bratianu, Ion, the younger, 246, 420, 421, 424, 534; at Gherghița, 420-21; appearance of, 422; and author, 422-3; Prince Bülow and, 423; at Bistrița, 424; as Prime Minister, 534; and Sasonov, 583; at Crown Council, 587
 Bratianu, Madame Ion, *see* Marghiloman, Madame
 Brayton, Lily, 288
 Breslau, manoeuvres at, 472-4
 Brückner, 171
 Bucarest, 287, 310, 325, 351, 502, 593; feminine world of, 289-90; foreign ministers at, 290; description of, 305; palace at, 283-4, 310, 483; gaiety of, 367; "Chaussée" at, 370-72, 374; picturesque sides of, 372; villages round, 374; Kennedys in, 433; court balls at, 483-4; royal guests at, 485, 488; Crown Prince of Germany visits, 514; monasteries near, 529; Friedrich of Hohenzollern and his wife in, 532; heat of, 540; aeroplanes in, 541; and war with Bulgaria, 549; conference in, 550; German ministers at, 568
 Buckingham Palace, 49, 50, 54, 60
 Buftea, 514, 534
 Buicliu, Dr., 384
 Bulgaria, war with, 549, 550; Roumanian army enters, 551
 Bullones, Marquis de Sierra, 120
 Bülow, Prince von, 290, 317, 423
 Bunsen, Marie, 504-5
 Burg Hohenzollern, 226
 Burgas, battle of, 550
 Bușteni, 511
 Butler, Miss, 105
 Bütner, 171
 Buzău, 411

C

- Cadere, Dr., 555
 Calea Victoriei, Bucarest, 372
 Câmpina, 544
 Cannes, 398
 Cantacuzène, Alexandra, 369
 Cantacuzène, Constance, 556-7
 Cantacuzène, Dr. Jean, 322, 384, 552, 555
 Cantacuzène, George (Nabab), 259
 Cantacuzène, Georges, 426, 530
 Cantacuzène, Madame Marie, 260, 289-90, 408
 Cantacuzène, Maruka, 440-42, 447-8
 Cantacuzène, Michel, 440, 442
 Capella Palatina, 138
 Carlos, Crown Prince of Portugal, 43, 44
Carmen, 171, 235-6
 Carmen Sylva, *see* Elisabeth of Roumania
 Carol I, King of Roumania, 202, 273, 276, 286, 293, 294, 301, 303-4, 320, 340, 352, 372, 394, 395, 396, 397; his austerity, 203, 276, 279, 284-5, 314, 328, 432; looking for wife for Crown Prince, 206; unknown to author, 210; Prince Ferdinand's fear of, 212; his coming to Sigmaringen, 223; his arrival at Sigmaringen, 223; his meeting with author, 223-4; discussions about wedding, 224-5; his attitude towards Kaiser, 226; his health proposed by Kaiser, 227; his arrival in London, 228-9; Queen Victoria asks after, 233; arrives at Windsor, 237; his dislike of English court dress, 237; at Windsor, 237-8; in London, 239; his presents for bride and her sisters, 240; has no son, 246; character of, 247-8; trains his nephew, 248; and his nephew's love for Mlle. Vacarescu, 249; on good terms with Princess of Wied, 256; arrives at Sigmaringen for author's wedding, 259; his retinue at Sigmaringen, 259-62; brother of Countess of Flanders, 261; resembles his sister, 262; his liking for Prince Alfred, 263; his esteem for Emperor Franz Joseph, 274; receives author at Bucarest, 280, 282; at palace, 283-4; with author at receptions, 287; and the Corps Diplomatique, 290; influence of, 285, 291, 294; anxiety as to author's health, 298, 302; pictures of, 299; his plans for entertaining author, 299, 302-3; his conversation, 304; at Cernica, 306; goes to Sinaia, 309; at Castel Peles, 309, 310, 497; and Duchess of Edinburgh, 313, 314, 405; at birth of Prince Carol, 315; and Princess Beatrice, 317; and author, 318-19, 417, 420, 446, 560; and Carmen Sylva, 322, 354; and Princess Elisabetha, 322; allows author to travel, 325, 326; and author's children, 325, 446, 521; court of, 327-8, 336, 420; kindness of, 328; and Princess of Saxe-Meiningen, 344-5, 403, 560; and Kaiser, 345; and education of Prince Carol, 346, 400, 401, 563-5; character of, 354, 490-500, 502; and author's riding, 358-60; and Sinaia forests, 361, 362; affection of, for author, 361, 362, 368, 388, 446; makes author chief of 4th Roşiori, 363; and invitations to author, 367; at costume ball, 367-9; *chasseur* of, 371-2; and illness of Prince Ferdinand, 385-7; and death of Dr. Kremnitz, 388; "Mémoires" of, 389; leaves for Switzerland, 390; return of, 392; spies of, 394, 400; and nephew's visit to Félix Faure, 398-9; and French Republic, 398; and Miss W., 400-401, 403; at Abbazia, 405; as a politician, 407, 431; and Sturdza, 408; and the Liberals, 408; and Jaques Lahovary, 410; and Take Ionescu, 411; and author's ladies-in-waiting, 412, 413; and Bratianu, 423; and friendships, 429, 430; and Astors, 438; and Royal guests, 483-4, 485, 487-9, 499-500, 512-15; and Bucarest palace, 483; and Boris Vladimirovitch, 493; receives military deputations, 508; and author's "Juniperus," 510-12; drives to Buşteni, 511; and Prince Nicholas, 517; and Prince Carol, 518; and motors, 528-9; and death of Leopold of Hohenzollern, 531; ill-health of, 533, 536; and excursions on Danube, 537; and Cernavoda bridge, 538-9; and aeroplanes, 541; supports William of Wied's claims to Albania, 542; and author's illness, 544; wards off war, 544, 549; and entry into Bulgaria, 550; and cholera, 552-3; and Triple Alliance, 566-8, 586; and Germany, 567-9; Tsar's visit to, 580-83; and outbreak of war, 584-8, 592; and abdication, 589-91; death of, 593-4
 Carol, Prince, of Roumania, 320, 591; birth of, 314-15; christening of, 317-18; education of, 320, 400, 401, 563-5; and Princess Alexandra, 324; at Sinaia, 387-8; at Nice, 393; illness of, 402; separated from mother, 403; character of, 518-19; and Princess Mircea, 543; at cholera camp, 553-5; in Potsdam, 565, 569-70, 584; proposed marriage of, 569, 575; in Russia, 572
 Carp, Madame Peter, 289
 Carp, Peter, 261, 281, 369, 409, 587; at Sigmaringen, 259; appearance of, 260
 Cassel, 202, 250
 Castel Peleş, 209, 345, 390, 401, 403, 493, 497

- Catargi, Alexandra, *see* Cantacuzène, Alexandra
 Catargi, Lascar, 259, 289, 298; at reception of author, 281; at costume ball, 369; as Prime Minister, 407
 Catargi, Olga, 375
 Catherine the Great of Russia, 92
 Cattaro, 116, 117
 Cecile, Crown Princess of Germany, 479-80
 Cernavoda bridge, 538
 Cernica, 305; monastery at, 306-7, 529
 Cesianu, Madame, 288
 Cettinje, 117
 Charles V, Emperor, 120, 121
 Charles I, King of Spain, 120
 Charles III, King of Spain, 120, 121
Charley's Aunt, 62
 "Charly," Cousin, *see* Saxe-Meiningen, Princess of
 Château Fabron, Nice, 393
 Chateaubriand, 148
 Cherkessow, 329, 336
 Chopin, 65
 Chrissoveloni, Jean, 442
 Chrissoveloni, Sybil, 440, 442
 Churchill, Lady Randolph, 74, 75
 Churchill, Winston, 32
 Ciolac, 376, 494
 Clarence House, 185, 449; author at, 32, 47, 49, 60; Duchess of Edinburgh's rooms at, 51-2; garden at, 50; curios in, 53, 54; dinner parties at, 55; Louisa of Coburg at, 76, 77
 Clemenceau, 259
 Cliveden, 435-6
 Coanda, Colonel, 210, 274
 Coburg, 120, 122, 160, 174, 175, 185, 196, 208, 226, 241, 258, 310, 325; author at, 24, 143, 147, 165, 192, 452; Prince Alfred educated at, 47; Duchess of Edinburgh at, 143-4; Schlossplatz at, 147; guests at, 202-3, 205, 206; theatre at, 169-72; skating at, 186; author's last stay at, 226; author's departure from, 269; wedding of Princess Alexandra at, 325
 Coburg, Duke of, *see* Edinburgh, Duke of
 Coburg-Kohary, Philip of, 76
 Cociu, Captain, 375
 Coke, Lady, 123, 124
 Colville, Cecil, 110, 137
 Connaught, Duchess of, 397
 Connaught, Duke of, 261, 263, 397
 Conservative party, in Roumania, 407, 409, 530, 550, 587
 Constantine, Grand Duchess, 342
 Constantine, Grand Duke, 342
 Constantinescu, Alecu, 426
 Constantinople, 113, 115, 426, 550
 Constantza, 324, 523, 539, 540-41, 580-83
 Cordova, Don Fernan de Gonzales de, 120
 Coronation Cathedral, Moscow, 334, 342
 Costinescu, Mr., 425, 590
 Cotheal, 195
 Cotroceni, 374; palace of, 363-5, 486, 533, 547; costume ball at, 367; illness of Prince Ferdinand at, 384-5; author's memories of, 522
 Cowes, 37, 38, 39
 Crețianu, Hélène, 440, 445, 448
 Crimea, 324, 580, 582
 Curtea de Argeș, Cathedral of, 382
 Cust, Sir Charles, 137
 Czekonics, 434
 Czernins, Otto, 434
- D
- Dagmar, Princess of Denmark, *see* Marie, Empress of Russia
 Dal'Orso, 507-8
 Dante, 368
 Danube, 221, 537-9, 552
 Darmstadt, 230, 404, 450
 Davila, Dr., 556
 Dax, 545, 546
 Deichman, Frau von, 503-4
 Deichman, Mr., 504
Der Fliegende Holländer, 171
 Devonport, 185, 192, 193, 194, 239, 268
Die Africanerin, 171
Die Räuber, 171
 Diocletian's Palace, Spalato, 116
 Dmitri, Grand Duke, 196
 Dobrogea, 36, 567
 Dolma Batché Palace, 115
 Don César, 170
 Duca, Jean, 425-6
 "Ducky," *see* Victoria Melita, Princess
 Dudley, Lady (Georgina), 74
 Due (Dhu) Loch, 71
 Duget, Mrs., 105
 Durazzo, 543
 Düsseldorf, 214
- E
- Eastwell, 3, 30, 38, 47, 49, 55, 143; author at, 4-6, 7-13, 75; description of, 42; author leaves, 45, 46; author rides at, 60
 Edinburgh, Duchess of (Grand Duchess Marie Alexandrovna), 278, 283, 293, 311, 312, 315, 322, 344, 345, 393, 402, 414, 574; her love of Russia, 3, 4; devoted to her children, 4; culture of, 5, 6; position at court of, 14; character of, 15, 66, 150-53, 179; religion of, 15, 16, 162; her attitude towards younger generation, 16, 17, 65, 66; loves Isle of Wight, 26; her attitude towards dress, 26, 27, 39; as conversationalist, 27; her

attitude towards illness, 27, 28, 151; her advice as to eating, 28; store cupboard of, 29; her maids, 28, 29; dislikes Cowes week, 37; punctuality of, 43; and Prince Leopold, 43, 44; favourite daughter of, 45; at Clarence House, 51, 52; Russian collection of, 53; dislikes Irving, 62; her servants, 63; at the piano, 65; in Scotland, 66; her relations with Queen Victoria, 69; love of mushroom-hunting, 71-3; and Lady Randolph Churchill, 75; in Russia, 78-80; and her father's assassination, 80; five brothers of, 82; at Peterhof, 85; and Grand Duke Serge, 85-6; at church in Russia, 90-92; influence of Countess Alexandrine Tolstoy on, 94-5; an excellent sailor, 96; arrives at Valletta, 97; her boudoir at San Antonio, 100; and the gardens at San Antonio, 101, 136; her popularity in Malta, 101; liberty given her children, 101, 103; gives her children horses, 102; obliged to restrict liberty of children, 104; favours German governess, 104; disagrees with Mademoiselle, 105; at fancy dress ball, 106; compliments Mademoiselle, 107; her friendship with Lady Fitzwilliam, 107, 108; at picnics in Malta, 109, 127-9; sends for Captain Bourke, 112; cruising with the fleet, 113, 116-18; her letter from Montenegro, 116-18; in Spain, 118-22; disapproves of her daughters, 128-9, 341, 342; in Happy Valley, 134; her pictures, 52-3; loves simple life, 143; her independence at Coburg, 144; and Fräulein, 144-5, 146, 165-7; her love of comedy, 170; her confidential servant, 175; and Rosenau "castellan," 176; her little houses, 177; her relations with her son, 185; skating at Rosenau, 186; and the marriage of her daughters, 188, 200; at Devonport, 192, 195; receives news of death of Grand Duchess Alexandra, 196; leaves for St. Petersburg, 196; her love for Grand Duke Paul, 198; her method of bringing up her children, 201, 241-2; visits Kaiser Wilhelm, 202; her advice to her daughters, 204; her friendship for Princess of Saxe-Meiningen, 205; gets into touch with King Carol, 206; Princess of Saxe-Meiningen's loyalty to, 208; at Munich, 209; and author's betrothal, 209; her love of Germany, 217; her friendship with Fürst Leopold, 216-17; takes her family to Sigmaringen, 218; at tea at "Inzighoven," 221; preparing to meet King Carol, 223; discusses author's wedding, 224-5; reassures her daughter, 228; and Prince Ferdinand in London, 239; and author's trousseau,

245, 264; and dowry for author, 245; takes author to see Carmen Sylva, 250; and Dowager Princess of Wied, 252, 256-7; with Carmen Sylva, 253; her ideas about travelling, 258-9; her friendship for Kaiser, 262; at Sigmaringen for author's wedding, 264; and author's wedding dress, 264-5; is missed by author, 266; visits author at Krauchenwies, 266; after author's wedding, 267; and author on the last evening at Sigmaringen, 266; her advice to Prince Ferdinand, 267; appoints Lady Monson to accompany author, 268; parts from author, 269; and clothes, 278; her advice to author, 279; her influence on author, 282, 377; letters from, 294-5; her arrival in Roumania, 313; disagreements of, with King Carol, 313-14, 405; at birth of Prince Carol, 315-17; at Prince Carol's christening, 317; contrasted to Queen Elisabeth, 323; leaves for Crimea, 324; and marriage of Princess Alexandra, 326; at Ilinsky, 341; and illness of Prince Ferdinand, 390; at "Foişor," 390; maxims of, 390; liberty allowed author by, 392; leaves Roumania, 392; and author's confinement, 403; at Gotha Schloss, 403-4; and death of Prince Alfred, 404; at Rosenau, 455; at Munich, 456-7, 527; at Tegernsee, 455, 457, 525; and author's cooks, 486; and Prince Nicolas, 526
 Edinburgh, Duke of, 286; marriage of, 3; as seen by his children, 4, 5; as a sportsman, 5; his games with his children, 11; at Christmas, 12; his garden at Swiss Cottage, 35, 36; as Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean Fleet, 42; his town residence, 47; shooting trophies of, 53; his dislike of Henry Irving, 62; absent-mindedness of, 71; his arrival at Valletta, 97; his popularity in Malta, 101; his attitude towards the French, 106; at fancy dress ball, 106; his disapproval of Mademoiselle, 107; and H.M.S. *Surprise*, 111, 113; his welcome at Constantinople, 113; presented to Sultan, 113; in Turkey, 113-16; in Montenegro, 118; in Spain, 118-22; in Russia, 123; leaves Malta, 137; at Rosenau, 168; given naval command at Devonport, 185, 192; dreads expatriation, 192; his friends at Devonport, 195; his attitude toward author's engagement, 212, 228; his sorrow at parting with author, 245; his dislike of Kaiser, 262; at Sigmaringen for author's wedding, 263; his parting from author, 269; at Coburg, 325; at Gotha Schloss, 404; death of, 455; in Roumania, 485-7,

- 490-93; and Princess Elisabetha, 487, 490; and Queen Elisabeth, 490-93
 Edinburgh Palace, Coburg, 47
 Edward VII, King (Uncle Bertie; Prince of Wales), 425; at Cowes, 38, 39; Duke of Edinburgh's collections left to, 53; meets author after her engagement, 229; his antipathy to Kaiser, 262; illness of, 435, 459-60; coronation of, 458-9; court of, 476
 Efimowitch, 339
Egmont, 171
 Ehrenburg, 147
 Eitel Friedrich, Prince, of Germany, 480, 570
 Eleonora, Queen of Bulgaria, 503
 Elisabeth, Queen of Roumania (Carmen Sylva), 161, 286, 301, 335; her smile, 34; interest of Queen Victoria in, 233; unable to be present at author's wedding, 246; death of her child, 246; character of, 247-8, 253; appearance of, 247; her favourite, Hélène Vacarescu, 248-9; obliged to go to Neu Wied, 250; tells author of her mother, 251; paintings by, 252, 254-5, 349, 379, 380-81; her mother speaks of her, 251, 252; her first meeting with author, 252-5; at lunch at Segenhau, 255; talks alone with author, 255-6; her love for brother, 257; her arrival at Sinaia, 320, 325; personality of, 321-2, 389; and birth of Elisabetha, 322-3; contrasted to Duchess of Edinburgh, 323; and author's children, 324, 344, 345; and Princess of Saxe-Meiningen, 344-5; and Miss Green, 347; intrigues against author, 347; longs for children, 348; salon of, 348-9, 350; favourites of, 350-53, 355, 492; and author, 347-8, 366; as a conversationalist, 349, 369; as a correspondent, 350; and Edith's love affair, 351-3; altruism of, 353; appearance of, 353, 489; and impostors, 354; her relations with King Carol, 354; imagination of, 353-5; as a companion, 356; at costume ball, 368; her collaboration with author, 380-81; and illness of Prince Ferdinand, 384-7; and death of Dr. Kremnitz, 388; and Frau Kremnitz, 389-90; leaves for Switzerland, 390; and Miss W., 403; at Abbazia, 405; social talents of, 488; and Duke of Edinburgh, 490-93; her guests, 493, 503-8; at Castel Peleş, 498; and military deputations, 508; and Fürstin Hohenberg, 512; and Crown Prince of Germany, 515; and motors, 529; and "Täntchen," 532-3; and King Carol's illness, 535; and Dr. Mamulea, 535; her scheme for the blind, 536; and excursions on Danube, 537-9; at Constantza, 539-40, 580-83; and aeroplanes, 541; and Sophie of Wied, 541-2; and throne of Albania, 542-3; and author's writing, 578; and outbreak of war, 585, 588, 593; and death of King Carol, 594
 Elisabetha, Princess, of Roumania, 323, 403; birth of, 320, 322; at Sinaia, 387-8; at Nice, 395; character of, 406, 519; and Ion Kalinderu, 420; and Duke of Edinburgh, 487, 490; appearance of, 519; at Munich, 526
 Elizabeth, Empress of Austria, 216, 221
 Elizabeth, Grand Duchess (Ella), 116, 338, 342, 344; life and death of, 7; beauty of, 7, 86, 87, 88, 201, 231; in court dress, 88; and Klodinsky tragedy, 337; at Gotha Schloss, 404; at Darmstadt, 450
 Elizabeth, Princess, 72
 Ella, Grand Duchess, *see* Elizabeth, Grand Duchess
 Ellen, Grand Duchess, 84
 Emma, Dowager Queen of Holland, 505-8
 Ems, 215
 Enescu, Fotin, 426
 Enescu, Georges, 355, 440, 441
 England, 3, 143, 165, 192, 227, 364, 425; and Roumania, 290, 569; luxury in, contrasted with Russia, 464-5; author's love of, 465; blue-bells in, 467; and the war, 585
 Entente, the, 566, 586
 "Ernie," *see* Hesse, Ernest, Grand Duke of Escorial, the, 121, 122
 Esher, 466-8
 Etter, Grahe, 339
 Eulalic, Infanta, of Spain, 120, 122

F

- Faure, Félix, 398-9
 Fellows, Captain, 137
 Ferdinand, King of Bulgaria, 76, 499-502, 568; asks for peace, 551
 Ferdinand, King of Roumania ("Nando"), 286, 293, 294, 297, 340, 352, 497; at Devonport, 194; meets author, 202; as guest of Kaiser, 203; at court dinner, 204; visits Princess of Saxe-Meiningen, 206; character of, 208-9, 246, 248, 250; proposes to author, 209; fears King Carol, 212, 222-3, 227; at Sigmaringen, 213, 452-5; son of Fürst Leopold, 215; his attitude towards his brother, Charles, 216; his modesty, 216; his marriage to a Protestant, 218, 225; resembles his mother, 218; presents bride to household, 222; his love for Sigmaringen, 222; meets King Carol, 223; his love for author, 224, 225, 228, 266, 273, 302;

- his loyalty towards Kaiser, 227; at Burg Hohenzollern, 227; at Windsor, 229; his meeting with the Munshi, 231; Queen Victoria asks after, 233; and official occasions, 237, 488; in London, 239; last months of engagement, 241; his dislike of getting wet, 242; teases author, 244; declared Heir Apparent of Roumania, 246; his loneliness in Roumania, 246, 248; Carmen Sylva a refuge for, 249; love affair with Hélène Vacarescu, 249; is sent travelling, 250; at parents' house, 263; wedding of, 264-5; his "honey days" at Krauchenwies, 265-6; leaves Coburg with author, 269; defensive attitude of, 274; reception of, at Predeal, 276; arrival at Bucarest, 277-8, 279-82; his Chasseurs, 280, 363; at Metropolitan Church, 282; arrives at palace, 283; influence of Carol on, 284, 291, 367; with author at receptions, 291; isolates author, 286, 290; life of abnegation of, 291-2; at "Foişor," 309, 387; his love of flowers, 310, 388; at Sinaia, 310-11; meets Victoria Melita at Predeal, 311; and disagreements between King Carol and Duchess of Edinburgh, 313-14; at birth of Prince Carol, 315; at coronation of Nicolas II, 329; at Archangelsky, 339; at Ilinsky, 339; leaves Russia, 344; and Princess of Saxe-Meiningen, 345; and author's unhappiness, 346; and education of Prince Carol, 346, 563-5; loyalty of, 347, 358; as a soldier, 358, 363, 365, 375, 399; riding, 359, 376; influence of Grand Duke of Hesse on, 367; driving on "Chaussée," 370; *chasseur* of, 371; author paints book for, 380; illness of, 384-7; convalescence of, 387-9, 390; at Nice, 393-8; visits Félix Faure, 398-9; returns to Roumania, 399; and choosing a governess, 400; and Miss ffoliet, 405; and the Junimea, 407; and Jaques Lahovary, 411; and Take Ionescu, 411; humiliation of, 412; and injustice done to author, 414, 418; and Kalinderu, 419; and Bratianu, 422; his ignorance of Roumania, 423; at Bistriţa, 423; in Russia, 476, 572, 576; and Kaiser, 478, 570; at balls in Bucarest, 484; and gipsy band, 494; and excursions on Danube, 537; in Paris, 546; and death of his mother, 561; and Roumania, 586; at Crown Council, 587; and the war, 587; and abdication, 589-91; and death of King Carol, 593, 594; takes oath as King, 595
- Ferdinand, King of Spain, 119
 Ferikydi, Anna, 446
 Ferikydi, Irene, 446
- Fernan Nuñez, Duchess of, 121
 Fernan Nuñez, Duke of, 121
 Festetics, Alix, 398
 Festetics, May, *see* Fürstenberg, Princess May
 Fetherstonhaugh, Gladys, 137
 ffoliet, Miss, 405
 Fiesoli, 399
 Fife, Duchess of, *see* Louise, Princess
 Fitzwilliam, Elsie, 108, 128-9
 Fitzwilliam, Ena, 108, 128
 Fitzwilliam, Mab, 108, 128-9
 Fitzwilliam, Lady Mary, 106, 107, 108, 119, 122, 128-9
 Flanders, Countess of, 261
 Florence, 399
 Florescu, General, 259, 260
 Florescu, Jean, 375
 "Foişor," 309, 387, 516
 Fonton, 317
 Ford, Sir Clare, 121
 Fortescue, 137
 France, 214, 215, 290, 337; and Roumania, 567; and the war, 586, 588
 Frankfurt, races at, 451-2
 Franz, Otto, 434
 Franz Ferdinand, Archduke, 275, 512, 562; murder of, 584
 Franz Joseph, Emperor of Austria, 274, 275; in Roumania, 485, 487-9, 512
 "Fräulein," 120, 124, 182, 185; arrival in Malta, 104; influence of, 143-7, 150, 165; description of, 145-6; methods of, 165-7, 169; engagement to Dr. X, 165; at dinner at Rosenau, 167-8; at Sigma-lingen, 218
 Frederick, Emperor of Germany, 121, 477
 Frederick, Empress, 33-35, 203, 326
 Frogmore, 20
 Froman, 182
 Fürstenbau, 219
 Fürstenberg, Prince Carl, 398, 434
 Fürstenberg, Prince Max, 262, 434, 474
 Fürstenberg, Princess May, 398, 434
 Fürstenstein, Silesia, 471, 472
- G
- Gadon, 339
 Gall, Baron, 434
 Gamble, 137
 Gardener, 63
 Gazert, Dr., 180
 Gazert, Gretchen, 180, 181, 395, 399, 404, 451
 Gazert, Frau Medezinalrat, 180
 Geier, Baron, 454
 George V, King of England (Prince George), 495; in Montenegro, 117; in Spain, 118, 122; in Malta, 127; his friendship for author, 127; at picnics in

- Malta, 127-8; kindness of, 130; his meeting with author after her engagement, 228, 230; coronation of, 458; court of, 476
- George, King of Greece, 196
- George, Prince, of Greece, 200
- George, Grand Duke, 84, 200
- Germani, Menelas, 409, 412
- Germany, 208, 213, 214, 215, 364, 374, 586; and Roumania, 567-9; and the war, 585, 586, 587, 588
- Gherghița, 420-22, 423
- Ghyca, Alexander, 426, 427
- Ghyca, Catherine, 426, 427
- Ghyca, Emil, 426, 427
- Ghyca, Grégoire, 426
- Ghyca, Jeanne, 427
- Ghyca, Mariette, 427
- Ghyca, Prince, 426
- Ghyca, Vladimir, 556
- Girgenti, 138
- Gotha, 403, 404, 405
- Gotha Schloss, 404
- Götterdämmerung*, 456
- Gramont, 215
- Granada, 119
- Grecianu, Madame Marie, 260, 273, 274, 286, 299, 300, 302; at banquet in Vienna, 276; advises Carol about author's health, 298, 302; her care of author, 303; at Nice, 395; death of, 395
- Greece, 549; declares war, 550
- Green, Miss (Nana), 346, 401, 402
- Green Park, 49, 54, 60
- Grimthorpe, Lord, 435
- Gudehowski, Austrian minister, 290, 317
- Gunst, 324
- H
- Hamilton, Sir Ian, 471
- Hamilton, Leila, 544
- Hanecken, Margaretha von, 181
- Hardinge, Sir Charles, 290, 317
- Harrison, Evelyn, 193
- Harrison, General, 193, 240
- Harrison, Lady, 193
- Harrison, May, 193
- Harrison, Violet, 193
- Hartory, 339
- Hastings, Stephen, 32, 33
- Hedworth, 137
- Heim, Dr., 160, 161
- Helen, Princess of Montenegro, 337-8
- Helferich, Fräulein, 161
- Hely Hutchinson, Lady, 137
- Hesse, Alice of, 87; *see also* Alexandra, Empress of Russia
- Hesse, Ernest, Grand Duke of (Ernie), 370; marriage of, 325-6; in Roumania, 366; character of, 366; driving on "Chaussée," 370; at Langenburg, 527
- Hesse, Grand Duchess of, *see* Victoria Melita, Princess
- Hitching Emperor, 41
- Hitrovo, 290
- Hobbs, 103
- Hohenberg, Fürstin, 512
- Hohenlohe Langenburg, Prince Ernest of, 326
- Hohenlohe Langenburg, Princess of, *see* Alexandra Victoria, Princess
- Hohenzollern, Anton of, 214
- Hohenzollern, Carlo of, 454
- Hohenzollern, Charles of, 214
- Hohenzollern, Charles the younger, of, 216
- Hohenzollern, Ferdinand of, *see* Ferdinand, King of Roumania
- Hohenzollern, Friedel of, 570
- Hohenzollern, Friedrich, Prince of ("Onkelchen"), 205, 210, 532; character of, 203; at Sigmaringen, 213; offered crown of Spain, 214
- Hohenzollern, Fürst Carl Anton of, 213
- Hohenzollern, Fürst Leopold of, 453; father of Prince Ferdinand, 210; his meeting with author at Sigmaringen, 213; son of Carl Anton of Hohenzollern, 214; is offered throne of Spain, 214; character of, 215, 216; his house at Sigmaringen, 219; is unlike King Carol, 224; in discussions about author's wedding, 224-5; his loyalty towards reigning house of Prussia, 226; proposes health of Duchess of Edinburgh, 227; brother of Countess of Flanders, 261; as host, 263, 264; death of, 531, 532
- Hohenzollern, Fürstin Antonia (Antoinette), 216-17, 454, 532; meets author, 213; beauty of, 216-17, 231; favourite son of, 218; home of, 219; personality of, 219-20; and her daughters-in-law, 220; at Inzighoven, 221; Winterhalter's portrait of, 231; at author's wedding, 263; death of, 561
- Hohenzollern, Fürstin Josephine of, 213, 217, 220, 263, 454
- Hohenzollern, Maria Theresa of, 220-21
- Hohenzollern, Princess of ("Tantchen"), 210, 532; character of, 203, 205; at Sigmaringen, 213
- Hohenzollern, William of, 215, 454
- Hohenzollern Hechingen, Friedrich William of, 213
- Hohenzollern Sigmaringen, Carl Anton of, renounces sovereign rights, 213; made Prime Minister, 213; offered crown of Spain, 214; as lover of art, 219
- Holland, 250
- Holland, Queen of, 400
- Horton, 119
- Howard, Colonel, 268, 292
- Hubermann, 350

Hungary, 241, 276
Hutchins, 63, 64, 65
Hyde Park, 60, 61

I

Iguanez, Countess, 137
Ileana, Princess, of Roumania, 521; character of, 521; and Tsarevitch, 580
Ilinsky, 201, 339, 340, 341
"Inzighoven," 221
Ionescu, Madame Take, 290
Ionescu, Take, 369, 409; character of, 411; speaks English, 425; and claimant to Albanian throne, 542; desires war with Turks, 544, 550; at Crown Council, 587
Irving, Henry, 62
Isabel, Infanta of Spain, 118, 119, 121
Isabella I, Queen of Spain, 119
Isabella II, Queen of Spain, 214
Italy, 268; and the war, 586

J

John, Don, of Austria, 120
Jolly, 30
Jungfrau von Orleans, 171
Junimea, 407
"Juniperus," 510-12
Junkowski, 339
Juvara, 426

K

Kaiser, the, *see* William II, Emperor of Germany
Kalenberg Castle, 155, 156
Kalinderu, Ion, 298, 534; at Windsor, 237-8; appearance and character of, 237-8; at Sigmaringen, 260; at reception of author, 281; as a model, 381; as King Carol's deputy, 418-19; and author, 419-20, 425; at Gherghița, 420-21; photographs of, 421; and expedition to Bistrița, 423; death of, 534
Karl, Archduke, of Austria, 512
Karl, Emperor of Austria, 275
Kennedy, Lady, 433
Kennedy, Sir John, 433
Kennedy, Yone, 433
Keppel, Colin, 110, 113, 114, 115, 118, 137
Keppel, Etta (*née* Blundell), 137, 268
Kiderlen-Wächter, 568
Kirill, Grand Duchess, *see* Victoria Melita, Princess
Kirill, Grand Duke, 84
Kirk Kilisse, battle of, 550
Klodinsky, tragedy of, 336-7
Königseck, Frau von, 76
Krasnoe, 82
Krauchenwies, 265, 453

Kremlin, 201, 333
Kremnitz, Dr., 384; death of, 388, 389
Kremnitz, Frau, 389
Kumanovo, battle of, 550

L

Lago, Graf, 434
Lahovari, Jacques, 259
Lahovari, Jean, 443-4
Lahovary, Alexander, 410
Lahovary, Jaques, 410-11
Lahovary, Madame Alexander (Madame Symka), 89, 410, 446
Lahovary, Madame Jaques, 89
Lambton, 137
Lamsdorff, Count, 73, 74
Lang, Louise (Long), 278, 286, 295-8, 302, 317
Langenburg, 404, 527
Larisch, Count Fritz, 434
Larisch, Countess Fritz, 434
Lascar, 426
Lăutars, 376, 494
Lecomte, Mr., 509
Leiden, Dr., 387
Leiningen, Prince of, 50, 51
Lemnos, 116
Lenin, 333, 334
Leopold, Duke of Albany, 43, 44
Leopold II, King of Belgium, 76, 261
Lepanto, 120
Le Strange, Captain, 137
Leuchtenberg, Zina, 85, 281
Liberal party, in Roumania, 407, 408, 425, 530, 587
Lichtenberg, Frieda von, 181
Linder, Marcelle, 396
Lisica, 403
Livadia, 324
Loghi, 382
London, 47, 49, 54, 63, 228, 239; coronations in, 458-9; court of, 476; conference in, 550
Lord Harry, 62
Louisa, Princess (of Coburg), 76, 77
Louise, Princess (Duchess of Fife), 38, 39, 40, 378
"Louiserowitch," 168
Löwel, 182
Luchian, 382
Lumley, Mr., 60, 61, 99
Lupu, Dr., 555
Lustspiele, 172
Luther, Martin, 162

M

Macbeth, 62
Macleod, Fiona, 67
"Mademoiselle," 118, 145; description of,

- 30, 31; with her pupils, 31, 46, 56; in Green Park, 54; in schoolroom, 57-9, 104; in Malta, 104; disagreements with Duchess of Edinburgh, 105; in fancy dress, 106-7; dislikes Lady Mary Fitzwilliam, 108, 128
- Madrid, 118, 119, 120, 121
- Mager, Major, 375
- Magura, 550
- Maiorescu, 426, 550
- Malaga, 118
- Mallet, 60
- Malta, 47, 61, 67, 78, 127, 145, 169, 192, 193, 228, 230, 268; arrival at, 96-7; horses in, 101; description of, 130-36
- Mamais, 523-5
- Mamulea, Dr., 535-6, 564
- Manu, General, 259, 369, 426
- Manuel, King of Portugal, 216
- Manuel, Prince, of Portugal, 43
- Marghiloman, M., 369, 409; description of, 411; his country house, 411
- Marghiloman, Madame, 290, 411
- Maria, Princess, of Roumania, 246
- Maria Christina, Queen of Spain, 118, 120, 121
- Maria da Gloria, Queen of Portugal, 215
- Maria Theresa, Archduchess, 275
- Marie, Empress of Russia (Aunt Minnie), character of, 83, 84; her rivalry with Princess of Mecklenburg, 84; at a military review, 89; at church, 90; her Name Day, 92-93; at the funeral of the Grand Duchess Alexandra, 197
- Marie, Dowager Empress of Russia, 576; at coronation of Nicolas II, 331
- Marie, Grand Duchess, 474
- Marie, Grand Duchess (Aunt Miechen), 474, 475, 576, 577
- Marie, Princess, of Roumania ("Mignon"), birth of, 403; character of, 403, 405-6, 519-20; appearance of, 405-6, 412, 414, 519; at Sigmaringen, 454; at Langenburg, 527
- Marie, Princess, of Russia, 574
- Marie, Queen of Roumania, birth of, 3; her childhood at Eastwell Park, 4-13; her feeling for beauty, 6, 13, 14, 23, 138, 149, 194; named after grandmother, 14; religion of, 15, 16, 161-4; her relations with mother, 16, 17; visits Victoria, 17-21; at Osborne, 20, 21, 26, 35-7; childish ecstasies of, 21-5; her dislike of French, 28; appetite of, 28; with her governess, 30, 31; at Osborne, 31, 41, 449-50; at Clarence House, 32; at Potsdam, 34; her impressions of Empress Frederick, 34-5; at Swiss Cottage, Osborne, 35, 36, 37; at Cowes, 37, 38; longs for white dress, 39; sorrows at parting of, 42, 138-9, 266-9; leaves Eastwell, 45; gives away toys, 46; education of, 47, 104, 144-6, 158-68; her dislike of London, 49; in Buckingham Palace garden, 49; in Clarence House garden, 50, 51; in Berlin, 52, 53; in Green Park, 54, 55; at Clarence House, 55-60, 63-5; her riding lessons, 60, 61; at the theatre, 61-3, 169-72; and her mother's servants, 63-4; and music, 65, 105, 161; and fairy stories, 65; in Scotland, 66-74; driving with Queen Victoria, 70, 71, 232-3; at Due Loch, 71; her relations with aunts and uncles, 71, 82, 83; picking mushrooms, 71-3; and her parents' friends, 74-6; her memories of dress, 76, 77, 87-8; in Russia, 78-81, 82; her memories of Alexander II, 79-81; her first compliment, 85; her memories of Grand Duke Serge, 86, 87; at a Russian Review, 89; at church in Russia, 89-92; and Name Day of Empress Marie, 92-3; at festivities at Peterhof, 92-3; leaves Russia, 95; her voyage to Malta, 96; her birthday at sea, 96; arrives at Malta, 96-7; at San Antonio, 97, 108-9; riding in Malta, 101-3, 128-9, 133; at picnics in Malta, 109-10, 127-30; her friends in Malta, 110-12, 137; and Captain Bourke, 111-16, 118-26; her first love, 126; her friendship with Prince George, 127; punishment of, 129-30; her memories of Malta, 130-36; in Happy Valley, 133-4; her memories of Verdala, 134-5; and servants at San Antonio, 136; leaving Malta, 137-8; her voyage to Naples, 138; leaves H.M.S. *Surprise* and Captain Bourke, 139; and Dr. X., 145, 165, 167-8; and Fräulein, 145-7, 165-8, 182; at Coburg, 147; at Rosenau, 147-50, 165; her memories of Duke Ernest, 153-7, 170; at dinner at Castle Kalenberg, 155; and her teachers, 158-61, 164; Confirmation of, 163-4; and dress, 165-6, 168-9, 204, 264-5, 278, 286, 335-6, 341-2, 369-70, 396, 407, 451-2, 460, 472, 484; on growing up, 168, 188; at Oberammergau, 172-3; and servants in Germany, 173-7; her love of building huts, 177-8; has feeling of unrest, 178-9; character of, 179, 183-4, 241-3, 277, 360, 377-8, 391, 413-14, 495-7, 559-60; her bosom friend in Coburg, 180; and her brother's friends, 182; her memories of her brother, 183-5; skating at Coburg, 186; at balls at Coburg, 187; and a keepsake, 187-8; her early suitors, 188; and the gardener's nephew, 190-91; at Admiralty House, Devonport, 192; her friendship with the Harrison daughters, 193, 240; returns to Devonport, 194-5, 239; goes to St. Petersburg, 196; at the

funeral of Grand Duchess Alexandra, 197-8; meeting relations in Russia, 199-200; at Ilinsky, 201, 340-42; at Moscow, 201; visits Kaiser, 202-5; at a court dinner, 204; likes Crown Prince of Roumania, 205; her visit to Berlin, 205-7; and Princess of Saxe-Meiningen, 205; meets Crown Prince at Munich, 208; accepts proposal of Prince Ferdinand, 209; her ignorance of future husband, 210; her thoughts of parting from Ducky, 210; meets Colonel Coanda, 210-11; meets her future relations, 212-22; goes to Sigmaringen, 212; her memories of her mother-in-law, 219; at tea at "Inzighoven," 221; Prince Ferdinand shows her his home, 222; meets King Carol, 223-4; on parting with Ducky, 224; with Prince Ferdinand, 225; discussions as to marriage of, 225-6; at the Burg Hohenzollern, 226-7; and her father's reception of her engagement, 228; faces separation from her family, 228; arrives in London, 228-9; meets Queen Victoria, 229; meets the Munshi, 230-32; her regret at not knowing Queen Victoria more intimately, 232; her only intimate talk with Queen Victoria, 233-4; at performance of *Carmen*, 235-6; her dislike of official ceremonies, 237; wedding presents of, 240-41; thoughts about marriage of, 241; her trousseau, 245; her father's sorrow at parting with, 245; and her husband's love affair with Hélène Vacarescu, 248-9; her impressions of Dowager Duchess of Wied, 250-52; her first impressions of Carmen Sylva, 253; lunches with Carmen Sylva, 255-6; drives with Princess of Wied, 256; visits Prince Wilhelm of Wied, 256-7; feels hostility towards Queen Elisabeth and her brother, 257; her journey to Sigmaringen, 258-9; meets Roumanians at Sigmaringen, 259-61; Royal guests at wedding of, 263-4; her "honey days" at Krauchenwies, 265; on last evening at Sigmaringen, 266-7; homesickness of, 267; is accompanied by Lady Monson, 268; her friendship for Etta Keppel, 268; leaves her family, 269; her journey to Bucarest, 273-4, 276-7, 279; her official visit to Vienna, 274-6; and travel, 276, 325, 326; reception of, at Predeal, 276; and Roumanian Army, 280; reception of, at Bucarest, 280-82, 285; and Roumanian beauty, 281, 288; at Metropolitan Church, 282; at Bucarest palace, 283-4, 295; appearance of, 286, 358; isolation of, 285, 286-7, 297, 346; standing sponsor, 287-8; at receptions, 287; and

ladies of Bucarest, 289-90; life of abnegation of, 291-2; Lady Monson takes leave of, 292-4; discovers herself pregnant, 293; her correspondence with mother, 294-5; her love for "Bully," 296-8; her health, 298-300, 302; tea-parties arranged for, 298-300; and Dr. Young, 300-302; at Holy Communion, 302; inspects fortresses, 303; in the country, 303-6, 307-9; her love of Roumania, 305, 589; at Cernica, 306-7; at Paserea, 307-8; at Sinaia, 309, 522; at "Foişor," 309; at Castel Peleş, 309, 497; her love of flowers, 310, 387-8; meets her sister, 311; gives birth to Carol, 314-17; at christening of Carol, 317; her relations with King Carol, 318-20, 560; and Carmen Sylva, 320-22, 347-9, 350, 355-6; gives birth to Elisabetha, 322-4; at coronation of Nicolas II, 327-8; at King Carol's court, 328; in Russia, 328-44; and Crown Prince of Italy, 337; and Princess Helen of Montenegro, 337; at Archangelsky, 339; leaves Russia, 344; and Princess of Saxe-Meiningen, 344-5; and Miss Green, 346-7; unhappiness of, 346; her A.D.C.'s, 351-2; and Georges Enescu, 355; on Royalties, 356-7; household of, 358, 486; riding in Roumania, 358-62, 365, 369, 374-7, 390, 495, 508-9, 522-3, 524; horses of, 359-60, 361, 438; in Sinaia forest, 361-2; and 4th Roşiori, 363-4, 365, 369; in riding school, 365; dancing in Bucarest, 367, 368, 370, 483-4; at costume ball, 367-9; driving on "Chaussée," 370; in picturesque Bucarest, 372-3; at gipsy camps, 373-4; driving around Bucarest, 374; at picnics, 374-6; her writing, 377, 577-80; her painting, 378-80; collaborates with Queen Elisabeth, 380-82; and Roumanian art, 382; and illness of Prince Ferdinand, 384-7; and convalescence of Prince Ferdinand, 387; with Princess Beatrice at Sinaia, 390-92; criticism of, 391-2; on her life, 392-3; at Nice, 395-8; at Monte Carlo, 396; and Alexandrine Tolstoy, 396-7; meets Félix Faure, 399; in Italy, 399; returns to Roumania, 399; and choosing a governess, 400-401; dislike of Miss W., 401; and illness of Prince Carol, 402; gives birth to Princess Marie, 403; at Gotha, 403-5; and death of Prince Alfred, 404; leaves Gotha, 405; and Miss fiolet, 405; and Sturdza, 408, 412, 414-18; and political parties, 408-9; and Peter Carp, 409; at Villa Albatros, 411; humiliation of, 413; and her lady-in-waiting, 413; on injustice done her, 414-18; and Ion Kalinderu, 418-19; at Gherghiţa, 420-

- 22; and Ion Bratianu, 422-3; Prince Bülów and, 423; at Bistrița, 424; visits monasteries, 424; and Alexander Glyca, 426; on friends of royalty, 429-32; on power, 431; friends of, 432 *et seq.*; and Yone Kennedy, 433; and Austro-Hungarian Legation, 434; and the Astors, 435; at Cliveden, 435-6; at Clarence House, 449; at Middelburg, 450; at Darmstadt, 450-52; at Bad Schwalbach, 451; at Frankfurt races, 451-2; at Sigmaringen, 452-5; her holidays with Duchess of Edinburgh, 455-7; and Duke of Edinburgh, 455; at Munich, 455-7, 526-7; and Wagner, 456-7; at Tegernsee, 457, 525-6, 561-2; at English coronations, 458-60; at Duchess of Westminster's ball, 460-62; at dinner with Nicolas II, 462-4; at Sandringham, 466; at Esher, 466-8; at Fürstenstein, 471; at Breslau manoeuvres, 472-4; in Russia, 1908, 474-6; in Berlin, 474, 478-82, 570-72; and Austrian Emperor, 487-8; and gipsy band, 494; and King Ferdinand of Bulgaria, 501-2; and military deputations, 508; and her "Juniperus," 509-12; and her children, 516 *et seq.*; leaves "Foișor," 516-17; and birth of Princess Ileana, 520; at Cotroceni, 522; at Constantza, 523, 540, 580-83; at Mamais, 523-5; at Langenburg, 527; on the Danube, 537-9; and birth of Princess Mircea, 543; illness of, 543-5; at Dax, 544; in Spain, 545-6; in Paris, 546; returns to Roumania, 547; and cholera, 551-9; and education of Prince Carol, 563-5; and Russia, 569; at Potsdam, 569-70; in Tsarskoye, 572-3; and projected marriage of Prince Carol, 574-5; in St. Petersburg, 576-7; and outbreak of war, 584; and abdication, 589; and death of King Carol, 593; becomes Queen, 593, 595-6
- Marie Alexandrovna, *see* Edinburgh, Duchess of
- Marie Josepha, Archduchess, 275
- Marie Louise, Queen of Bulgaria, 502-3
- Marne, battle of, 592
- Marseilles, 122
- Mary, Queen of England, coronation of, 459
- Marzescu, Georges, 426
- Massa race-course, 103, 104, 137
- Matilda, housemaid, 173, 174-5
- Maude, Princess, 38, 39
- Mavrodi, Madame, 556
- Mazzarini, 398
- Mecklenburg, Princess of (Aunt Miechen), 84, 90
- Meister, 173, 176-7, 178
- Meistersinger, 457
- Mendès, Catulle, 350
- Meran, 404
- Mercier, Ruth, 378
- Messing, Fräulein Anna, 161, 170
- Midsummer Night's Dream, A*, 288
- "Mignon," *see* Marie, Princess, of Roumania
- Millais, paints author's portrait, 31
- Minnie, Princess, of Greece, 199
- Mircea, Princess, of Roumania, 547, 561, 580; birth of, 457, 543
- Mirko, Prince, of Montenegro, 117
- Misha, Grand Duke, 200
- Mishel, Grand Duke, 84, 200
- Moldavia, peasant revolt in, 530
- Moldavian Crown Domains, 424
- Monreale, 138
- Monson, Lady, 268, 273, 276, 286, 292-4
- Monson, Mrs., 116, 117
- Monte Carlo, 396
- Montenegro, 113, 116-18, 549
- Montenegro, Prince of, 117, 118, 338
- Montenegro, Princess of, 117
- Monte Pelegrino, 138
- Morier, Mr., 123
- Morsier, M. de, 32, 160
- Moruzi, Hélène, *see* Crețianu, Hélène
- Moscow, 124, 201, 326, 327, 333, 336, 339; coronation at, 327-8, 330, 333, 458
- Mount Edgecumbe, 195
- Mount Edgecumbe, Lady, 195
- Mount Edgecumbe, Lord, 195
- Müller, Herr Obersuperintendent Dr., 162
- Munich, 208, 209, 310, 380; author in, 455-7; Wagner in, 456-7
- Munshi, the, 230-32

N

- "Nana," *see* Green, Miss
- "Nando," *see* Ferdinand, King of Roumania
- Naples, 138
- Naples, Queen of, 221
- Napoleon III, Emperor of France, 214, 398
- Neamț, monastery of, 424
- Nelidoff, Madame, 115
- Neu Wied, 246, 250
- Neuman, Professor, 160
- Neumann, 384
- Neville, 137
- Nice, 393-4, 395, 434
- Nicolas II, Emperor of Russia, 517, 569, 577; as a boy, 84; morganatic marriages not sanctioned by, 198; sends representative to author's wedding, 261; at wedding of Princess Alexandra, 326; engagement of, 326; coronation of, 326,

327-31; appearance of, 330-31; entry of, into Moscow, 330-31; in the Cathedral, 332; death of, 333-4; receives envoys on coronation, 335; at Ilinsky, 339; at Darmstadt, 450; gives dinner at Tsarkoye Selo, 462-4; retirement of, 474, 573-4; at the theatre, 576; at Constantza, 580-83
 Nicolas, Grand Duke, 82, 200
 Nicolas, Prince, of Greece, 200
 Nicolas, Prince, of Roumania (Nicky), 412, 516; character of, 518; at Tegernsee, 526; at Langenburg, 527
 Nihilists, 197
 Noailles, Anna de, 546
 Norris Castle, 33

O

Oberamergau, Passion Play at, 172, 173
 Oberhof, 455
 Odessa, 344
 Odobescu, Colonel, 376-7
 Odobescu, Goe, 375
 Odobescu, Hélène, 375, 376
 Olanescu, Constantin, 426
 "Old Palace, the," 346, 390, 392, 494, 497
 Olga, Grand Duchess, of Russia, 84, 569, 574
 Olga, Queen of Greece, 91, 196
 Oltenia, revolt in, 530
 "Onkelchen," *see* Hohenzollern, Friedrich of
 Orleans-Bourbon, Infanta Beatrice of, *see* Beatrice, Princess
 Orloff, Prince, 22
 Osborne, 33, 47, 66, 160, 193, 449; Queen Victoria at, 19, 20, 232; author at, 26, 31, 36, 37, 41, 232; farm at, 41
Osborne, 96, 97
 Osborne, Lady Emma, 57
 Osborne Cottage, 26, 30
 Oslow, church of, 163
 Otto, Archduke, 275

P

Paar, Graf, 489
 Palady, Vidine, 446
 "Palais Edinburg," 147
 Palermo, 138
 Paléy, Princess, 198
 Palma, 122
 Paris, 61, 410, 546
Parsifal, 172, 457
 Paserea, 305, 529; convent at, 307
 Passavant, Fräulein von, 185
 Paul, Grand Duke, 82, 85, 116, 201, 339, 342-3; death of wife of, 196; at wife's funeral, 197-8; second marriage of, 198
 Pejatchewitch, 434

"Pelişor," 517
 Perieţanu, Captain, 523
 Perticari, General, 565
 Perticari, Hélène, 288, 556, 565, 569
 Peter the Great, Tsar of Russia, 196
 Peter and Paul fortress, 196, 199
 Peterhof, 82, 85, 92
 Pfaueninsel, 210
 Pherikidi, Michel, 426
 Philip II, King of Spain, 120
 Philip IV, King of Spain, 119
 Pitcathly, Nana, 5; favourite of, 5; death of, 45; discipline of, 55, 56
 Playfair, Doctor, 315
 Pless, Prince, 471
 Pless, Princess Daisy of, at Duchess of Westminster's ball, 461; author visits, 471; at Breslau, 472-3; at Berlin, 480
 Ploesti, 420
 Plymouth, 192, 194, 195
 Poener, Marie, 538
 Pompeii, 138
 Pope, the, and author's marriage, 225
 Popescu, Stefan, 382
 Port Mahon, 122
 Potsdam, 244, 246, 248, 250, 569-70, 584; author's betrothal at, 210, 227; Neue Palais at, 34, 209
 Predeal, 276, 311
 Prim, Marshall, 214
 Prinkipo Islands, 114
 Prinzregententheater, Munich, 456
 Prodan, 375
 Prussia, 213-14
 Pucci, Sister, 553, 555, 556, 558
 Pugno, Raoul, 350

R

Rasputin, 574, 577
 Rasti, Madame, 281
 Reinhardtsbrunn, 455
 Reinhart, dancing master, 164
 Réjane, 350
 Renwick, Fanny, 28, 29, 37
 Ressel, 376
Rheingold, 456
 Ribbeck, Reinhold, 164, 182
 Riedesel, Herr von, 451
 Rieman, Professor, 158, 159
 Robert, coachman, 22, 38, 102
 Robescu, General, 274, 486
 Romalo, Dr., 390, 544, 564
 Rose, 173, 175, 404
 Rosebery, Lord, 425
 Rosen, Dr., 568
 Rosenau, 147-9, 177, 190, 206, 455, 456; description of, 147-8; Duchess of Edinburgh at, 148-51; author at, 148-51, 165, 178, 243; servants at, 173; skating at, 266

- Rosetti, Theodor, 426
 Roşari, Patnu, 363-4, 365, 369, 495
 Rosnovanu, Colonel Georges, 328
 Rostand, "Chantecler" of, 50
 Roswadowski, Colonel, 434
 Roumania, 210, 218, 240, 241, 255, 282, 298;
 land of Romance, 225; political passions
 in, 261; its ambition, 276; author's ar-
 rival in, 416; position of ministers in,
 289; its attitude towards other countries,
 290; author's love for, 305, 307, 374,
 423, 589; description of, 307-8; author's
 first years in, 327; and Russia, 329, 566-
 7, 580; Princess of Saxe-Meiningen in,
 344; riding in, 358; its desire for large
 royal family, 360, 559; its attitude to-
 wards author, 364; Princess Victoria
 Melita in, 366-7; art in, 382; author's
 return to, 399; and Prince Carol's gov-
 erness, 400; politics in, 407-10; char-
 acter of people of, 417; Ferdinand's ig-
 norance of, 423; wit by men of, 427; a
 land of poetry, 440; untidiness of, 486;
 gipsies in, 494; Archduke Franz Ferdi-
 nand and, 512-13; peasant revolts in,
 530; commerce in, 539; aeroplanes in,
 541; declares war on Bulgaria, 549-50;
 causes of entering war, 549; claims of,
 to Silistria, 549, 550; and Triple Alli-
 ance, 566-8; and Austria-Hungary,
 566, 567-8, 586-7; and Germany, 567-8,
 587; and the Entente, 586; and outbreak
 of war, 586; neutrality of, 588
 Rubido-Zichy, 434
 Rujinski, Colonel, 554, 558
 Rumbold, Midshipman, 110-11, 136
 Russia, 3, 47, 165, 167; author's visit to, 78-
 81, 196 ff.; court dress in, 87; military
 review in, 89; religious services in, 282;
 and Roumania, 290, 566-7, 580; corona-
 tion of Emperor of, 327 *et seq.*; down-
 fall of, 339; luxury of, contrasted with
 England, 464-5; author in, 474-6; and
 Balkan War, 549; feeling of dissatisfac-
 tion in, 574; and the war, 588
 Russia, Red, 327
 Russischer Hof, Munich, 456
 Rustchuk-Varna line, 549
- S
- Sadowa, battle of, 214
 St. James's Palace, 49
 St. Paul's Bay, 109
 St. Petersburg, 82, 123, 124, 196, 295, 476,
 576; court of, 476; conference at, 550
 St. Rosalia, 138
 Salona, 116
 Salonica, 550
 San Antonio, 108, 127; description of, 97-
 101; author's friends at, 137
 San Giovanni degli Eremiti, Palermo, 52,
 138
 "Sandra," *see* Alexandra Victoria, Prin-
 cess
 Sandringham, 127
 Sandro, Grand Duke, 200
 Sani, Grand Duchess, 91
 Sarasate, 350
 "Sasha, Uncle," *see* Alexander III
 Sasonov, 583
 Satmari, 382
 Sauer, 350
 Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, Alexandrina, Duch-
 ess of, 154, 156-7
 Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, Ernest, Duke of,
 Duke of Edinburgh heir to, 47; his
 court at Coburg, 153, 161, 225-6; his of-
 ficial residence, 147; character of, 153-
 5; appearance of, 154; marriage of, 154;
 author at dinner with, 155-6; photo-
 graph of, 156; his wife's love for, 157;
 his love of the theatre, 170; advanced
 age of, 192
 Saxe-Meiningen, Bernhard Erbprinz of,
 345
 Saxe-Meiningen, Hereditary Princess of,
 205; and author, 206-8; death of, 208;
 at Rosenau, 243-5
 Saxe-Meiningen, Princess of ("Charly"),
 560; at Sinaia, 344-6, 392; at Castel
 Peleş, 403; intrigues of, 490; and motor-
 cars, 528
 Saxe-Weimar, Duke of, 480-82
 Saxony, King of, 275, 344, 561-2
 Saxony, Queen Carola of, 455
 Schaek, Mr. de, 160
 Schaub, 175
 Schaub, *Stallmeister*, 173
Schauspiele, 172
 Schiller, 63, 170, 171
 Schlesack, 350
 Schlitter, 339
 Schlossplatz, Coburg, 147, 160
 Schultes, 182
 Scobelew, General, 85
 Scotland, author's visit to, 66-74; author's
 love, for, 66-8; Queen Victoria and, 68
 Scutari, 118
 Segenhaus, 250, 258
 Sengerschloss, 455
 Serajevo, 275, 584
 Serbia, 549, 584, 586, 588; declares war,
 550
 Serbia, Queen of, 300, 426
 Serge, Grand Duke (Uncle Serge), 82,
 116; assassination of, 7, 85-6; character
 of, 85-6; at funeral of Grand Duchess
 Alexandra, 198; author as guest of, 201,
 339; blamed for Klodinsky tragedy, 337;
 as host, 342; at Gotha Schloss, 404; at
 Darmstadt, 450

- Serge, Grand Duke (author's cousin), 200
 Shakespeare, 63, 170
 Siberia, 334
Siegfried, 456
 Sigmaringen, 213, 265, 281, 296, 310, 532;
 author's first visit to, 212, 217-22; court
 at, 217; author's wedding at, 226, 245,
 250, 258, 264-5; author's journey to,
 258-9; Ion Kalinderu at, 260; author's
 holidays at, 452-6
 Silistria-Balcic line, 549
 Simmons, Sir Lintorn, Governor of Malta,
 97, 106
 Simu, Madame, 288
 Sinaia, 557, 584; court moves to, 309, 540;
 King Carol in, 309, 483; author in, 310,
 517; court leaves, 325; Prince Ferdi-
 nand's convalescence at, 387-8; Miss W.
 in, 401-2; Astors in, 437-8; Ghycas at,
 426-7; Emperor Franz Joseph at, 488;
 Duke of Edinburgh at, 488; Queen
 Eleonora at, 503; King of Sweden at,
 505; riding at, 508-9; Archduke Franz
 Ferdinand at, 512, 513; author's memo-
 ries of, 522; Prince of Wied at, 542;
 Crown Council at, 587; death of King
 Carol at, 593
 Sinaia forest, 361, 362, 390
 Skitty (horse), 22, 25, 38, 46, 99
 Slade, Colonel, 111
 Slade, Mrs., 137
 Slatineanu, Dr., 552
 Slivici, Mademoiselle, 552
 Smith, William, 63
 Sofia, conference in, 550, 551
 Solovieff, Mr., 124
 Sophie, Crown Princess of Greece, 460,
 471
 Soutzo, Hélène, 440, 442, 448
 Spain, search for king for, 214-15
 Spain, Queen of, 545
 Spalato, 116
 Späthe, 382
 Spitzer, 407
 Stafford House, 57
 Steriadi, 382
 Stirbey, Elise, *see* Marghiloman, Madame
 Stirbey, Nadèje, 440, 443, 448, 534
 Stirbey, Prince Barbo, 514, 515, 534, 589,
 593
 Stork, Petraşcu, 382
 Strachey, Lytton, 153
 Strâmbulescu, 382
 Streatfield, Midshipman, 110, 136
 Sturdza, Demetre, 261, 530; description
 of, 408; and author, 412, 414-18; at
 Gherghiţa, 420, 421-2; and Ion Bratianu,
 422; resignation of, 534
 Sturdza, Madame, 289, 410
Surprise, H.M.S., 111; cruises in, 113-
 16, 122; author leaves Malta in, 137-8
 Sutherland, Duke of, 57
 Swabia, 226
 Sweden, King of, 344
 Sweden, King Gustav of, 505
 Swiss Cottage, Osborne, 35-6; museum
 at, 36-7
 Switzerland, 390
 Symka, Madame, 289, 410
 Syracuse, 138
- T
- Tannhäuser, 170, 171, 342
"Tantchen," see Hohenzollern, Princess of
 Tarragona, 122
 Tatiana, Grand Duchess, 574
 Tegernsee, 452, 455, 456, 525
 Terks, Herr Obergärtner, 191
 Terry, Ellen, in *Macbeth*, 62
 Teveggi, Frifi (Baroness Geier), 454
 Therapia, 115
 Thibaut, 350
"Tinerimea," 382
 Toledo, 119, 120
 Tolstoy, Countess Alexandrine, 93-4, 104,
 396-7
 Tommy (pony), 60, 61, 99, 102, 128
 Tony, 136
Torquato Tasso, 171
 Trani, Countess, 221
 Trani, Princess, 220-21
 Trau, 116
 Triandafil, 281
 Triple Alliance, 566-8, 586
 Tripolis, 125
Tristan, 457
 Tryon, Admiral Sir George, 125
 Tsarskoye, 82
 Turkey, Sultan of, 113-16
- U
- Usupoff, Prince, 339-40
 Usupoff, Princess, 339-40
- V
- Vacarescu, Hélène, 248-50, 274, 286
 Vacarescu, Rada, 369
 Valencia, 118, 122
 Valletta, 97, 130
 Vandyke, 350
 Varatic, convent of, 424
 Velazquez collection, Madrid, 119
 Venice, 399
 Verdala, 109, 134, 135
 Vermont, 382
 Vernescus, 370
 Verona, 382
 Versailles, 339
 Victor Emmanuel, Crown Prince of Italy,

- at coronation of Nicolas II; and Princess Helen of Montenegro, 337
- Victoria, Princess, 38, 460
- Victoria, Queen, mother of Duke of Edinburgh, 3; Princess Victoria Melita named after, 14; as seen by her grandchild, 17-21; has breakfast out of doors, 20, 21; Sunday dinner with, 24, 25; lends Osborne Cottage to Duke of Edinburgh, 26; commissions picture by Millais, 31; her farm at Osborne, 41; lends Abergeldie Maines to Duke of Edinburgh, 66; at Balmoral, 68; her relations with her children, 68, 69; out driving, 69, 70; and mushrooms at Balmoral, 71-2; her love for her husband, 154; her attitude towards author's engagement, 212; wishes author's wedding at Windsor, 225; author to visit, 227-8; receives author and Prince Ferdinand, 229-30; and the Munshi, 230-32; author's ignorance of, 232-3; driving at Osborne, 233-4; her interest in theatrical art, 234; at a performance of *Carmen*, 235-6; Ion Kalinderu presented to, 238; unable to attend author's wedding, 261; sends doctor to author, 314; and Princess Alexandra's marriage, 326; diamond jubilee of, 387; at Osborne, 449; court of, 476
- Victoria, H.M.S., 125-6
- Victoria and Albert* (Royal yacht), 37
- Victoria Melita, Princess ("Ducky") (Grand Duchess of Hesse), 293, 517, 574; birth of, in Malta, 4; appearance and character of, as a child, 5; named after Queen Victoria, 14; childish raptures of, 21; at Swiss Cottage museum, 36, 37; on Princess Beatrice, 45; her riding lessons, 61; at Clarence House, 64; musical talent of, 65; at Birkhall, 66; mushroom-hunting at Balmoral, 72; her marriage to Grand Duke Kirill, 84; on the voyage to Malta, 96; at San Antonio, 98, 108; riding in Malta, 101-3; lessons in Malta, 104-5; at picnics in Malta, 127-9; in the Happy Valley, 133-4; at Rosenau, 149; education of, at Coburg, 158-67; her music lessons at Coburg, 161; Confirmation of, 163; and Dr. X., 167; builds a hut at Rosenau, 178; her feeling of unrest, 178; her bosom friend, 181; character of, 189, 257; as mentor, 190; goes to St. Petersburg, 196; at coronation of Nicolas II, 202; visits Kaiser Wilhelm, 202; likes Crown Prince of Roumania, 205; her memories of Berlin visit, 207; at author's engagement, 210; her thoughts of parting from author, 210; with Colonel Coanda, 211; author on parting with, 224, 269; her ideas on marriage, 241; and her sister, 244; at Segenhaus, 250, 252-4; journeys to Sigmaringen, 258-9; is missed by author, 266; nurses author, 295; arrives at Sinaia, 311-12; leaves Sinaia, 317; marriage of, 325; her marriage dissolved, 326; at coronation of Nicolas II, 338, 341; visit to Roumania, 366 *et seq.*; dancing in Bucarest, 367, 369; at costume ball, 367-9; riding in Roumania, 369, 374-7; driving on "Chaussée," 370; in picturesque Bucarest, 372-3; at gipsy camps, 373-4; driving around Bucarest, 374; as an artist, 378-9; leaves Roumania, 387; at Gotha Schloss, 404; at Osborne, 449-50; at Middelburg, 450; at Bad Schwalbach, 451; at Frankfurt races, 451-2; in Paris, 546; in St. Petersburg, 577
- Vienna, 274, 290, 426; court of, 476
- Villa Albatros, 411
- Vincent, Lady (Helen), 74
- Vladescu, General, 260; at reception of author, 281; at Sinaia, 310; with Princess Beatrice, 316
- Vladimir, Grand Duke, 82, 84, 475, 576
- Vladimirovitch, André, 494
- Vladimirovitch, Boris, 338, 361, 363, 398, 493, 494
- Vlaicu, 541
- W
- W., Miss, chosen as Carol's governess, 400-401; description of, 401; her hostility towards author, 401-2; and illness of Prince Carol, 402; departure of, 403, 405
- Wagner, Richard, 456
- Wales Family, 40
- Walküre*, 456
- Werther, Prussian Ambassador in Paris, 215
- Westminster, Duchess of, 460-62
- Westminster, Duke of, 460
- Westminster Abbey, coronations in, 458
- Wied, Dowager Princess of, 256; appearance and character of, 250-51; and *Carmen Sylva*, 251-2; supposed secret marriage of, 255
- Wied, Prince William of, 256-7, 541-3
- Wied, Princess Sophie of, 541-3
- Wied, Victor of, 505
- Wiener, footman, 24, 173-4
- Wilhelmshöhe, 202, 204
- William I, Emperor of Germany, 477
- William II, Emperor of Germany, his relations, 33, 203; at Wilhelmshöhe, 202; character of, 203, 262-3, 477, 478; approves author's engagement, 209; gives a banquet, 210; at Burg Hohenzollern,

226, 227; arrives at Sigmaringen for author's wedding, 262; at author's wedding, 264; at Princess Alexandra's wedding, 326, 345; and Mariette Ghyca, 427; at military parade, 472-3; court of, 476; birthday of, 480; and Roumania, 490; at funeral of Fürstin Antonia, 561; and King of Saxony, 561-2; opens library in Berlin, 571-2
 William, Crown Prince of Germany, 479, 570; in Roumania, 514-15
 William, King of Prussia, 213, 214, 215
 Windsor, 31, 212, 239; author at, 19, 229, 235; performance of *Carmen* at, 235-6; Ion Kalinderu at, 238, 260; St. George's Chapel at, 225
 Windsor Park, 436
 Winter, 182
 Winterhalter, portrait by, 231
 Wittgenstein, Prince, 340-41
 Wolfsgarten, Darmstadt, 450, 451
 Wyndham, Florence, 432
 Wyndham, Lady, 375, 432
 Wyndham, Nelly, 375, 432, 433
 Wyndham, Sir Hugh, 375, 432

X

X., Dr., 120; influence of, 143-4, 146-7, 150, 165-6; character of, 144-5; his attitude to his pupil, 145, 183, 185; marriage of, 147, 168; at dinner, 167-8; at Oberammergau, 172-3; as friend of Princess of Saxe-Meiningen, 205; at Sigmaringen, 218; at Rosenau, 244
 Xantos, 398
 Xenia, Grand Duchess, 84, 199

Y

Yildiz Palace, 113
 Young, Dr., 300-301
 Yovell, Sybil, *see* Chrissoveloni, Sybil
 Ysaye, 350

Z

Z., Monsieur, 563-4
 Zara, 116
 Zedler, 339
 Zimnicea, cholera camp of, 553, 559

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MEN

